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Descriptive Prospectus on Application.

THE RELIGION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

ITS PLACE AMONG THE RELIGIONS OF THE NEARER EAST

BY

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PREFACE

THE author's aim in the little book which is now published is to give a succinct, but as far as possible complete, account of the nature of the religion of the O.T. In so doing he has endeavoured to lay especial emphasis on those features of this religion *which distinguish it from the other religions of antiquity and constitute its peculiarity.* One will therefore expect to find neither a minute examination of the rival religions with which the Israelites came into contact nor a detailed exposition of the whole course of the history and of the conceptions of the Israelite religion. To have attempted either would only have increased the difficulties of an already difficult task. For if, on the one hand, the reader had been

invited to consider the whole field of inquiry concerning the non-Israelitic religions, his attention might easily have been diverted from their really important features, and, besides, a disproportionate amount of space would have been occupied; while, on the other hand, the endeavour to trace the many ramifications of the separate problems which present themselves to the student of O.T. history would have perpetually broken the thread of the narrative and would certainly have operated prejudicially in obliterating features which should have been salient. For detailed investigations and completer references to authorities, the reader will therefore consult the commentaries to the O.T. and the histories of the Israelite and other religions of antiquity.

A short conspectus, such as is here offered, may possibly be of use to the general reader, to many who would wish to find a guide in the present time of controversy concerning the religion of the O.T. and its relation to the other religions. I shall be glad, there-

fore, if the following pages enable anyone to realize the incomparable importance of the O.T. for the understanding of the history of religion in general, and especially for that of Christianity.

KARL MARTI.

CONTENTS

PAGES

PREFACE v

INTRODUCTION 1–35

CHAPTER I

THE NOMAD RELIGION . . . 36–71

CHAPTER II

THE PEASANT RELIGION 72–123

CHAPTER III

THE RELIGION OF THE PROPHETS . . . 124–183

CHAPTER IV

THE LEGAL RELIGION 184–237

RETROSPECTIVE AND ANTICIPATIVE . . . 238–251

RELIGION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

INTRODUCTION

During the last few years a very significant change has taken place in the way in which the O.T. is regarded. It is only quite recently that the right to make a comparison between the religion of Israel and the other religions of antiquity has been incontrovertibly established—the right, that is, to make a real comparison, and not one in which the result is prejudged on religious or dogmatic grounds, which sees on the one side only light and truth, and on the other only darkness and error, but one which places the religions side by side in a perfectly unbiassed historical

spirit, and examines and judges each according to its kind. At present the right has been attained, and is generally recognized in the scientific world; in fact, the importance of the method of religious historical criticism—or, more exactly, of the method of comparative religion—has in the meantime not only been recognized, but has in many cases even become popular. Indeed, there are already unmistakable signs of exaggeration; one is in danger of rushing into the other extreme, of paying attention exclusively to points of similarity and resemblance, and of entirely disregarding, or at any rate thrusting into the background, as unimportant all that is dissimilar. As the conclusion of our commentary we have now to assign the religion of the O.T. its place amongst the religions of the nearer East, and it will be, therefore, an important part of our task to pay especial attention to the unique features of the Israelite religion besides noting the religious stock possessed by Israel in common with its neighbours.

This question as to what constitutes the unique nature of the Israelite religion demands an answer to-day far more imperatively and urgently than it did even a few years ago. Formerly it was supposed sufficient to answer the question by merely referring to the unique origin of the O.T. writings, which were in their time simply accepted as the original source and the firm foundation of the O.T. religion, just as the Koran in the case of Islam. But the time in which it was possible to be content with this answer has passed beyond recall, for scientific theology has exhaustively examined the origin of the O.T. as a whole as well as of each single part, and has conclusively proved, for all except the wilfully blind, first, that the O.T. writings do not constitute the primary cause of the O.T. religion, but are the documents and monuments of its history; and, secondly, that as regards the mode of their origin these writings do not occupy any peculiar position amongst the books of antiquity as a whole. They were composed and

written by the hands of men in the course of the last thousand years B.C., and they have met with the same fate as other books of antiquity: we should even be fully justified in maintaining that in the course of time they have experienced all manner of alterations of a peculiar nature, just because they were intended to serve the interests of the religion of Israel. It is not only that careless transcribers have introduced unintentional alterations and that private owners of manuscripts have increased the length of their copies by the addition of new paragraphs at their own pleasure, but these old writings have been regularly edited, and, finally, they have been systematically prepared for use as the religious writings of the Jews both in the synagogue and at home. We need but recall the difference which existed between the faith in pre-exilic Israel and that of the Jewish community in order to understand how absolutely essential a minute examination and thorough revision of the old documents had become in order to

harmonize them with the later writings and the new ideas and religious convictions.

If it is, therefore, impossible to appeal to the exceptional nature of the origin of the O.T., it can only be the contents which concern us in our present inquiry. Here, too, the position has completely changed within recent years. While no doubt in certain quarters the view still prevails that we possess in the O.T. the oldest tradition of the human race, and entirely original and primitive matter, in others it is confidently maintained to-day that practically nothing original is to be found in the O.T. On the one hand Israel is regarded, as far as its religion is concerned, as occupying an isolated position amongst its neighbours; it has been settled, as it were, on some fortunate island against which the waves of the great sea surge, but surge in vain; and if anything is discovered amongst other nations recalling anything that we know to have existed amongst the Israelites, then it is declared to have been borrowed from the O.T. and to

have been handed down in a deteriorated and degenerate form. Others consider the religious development of Israel to have presented an exact parallel to its political history. Just as the position of Palestine caused it to form the bridge between the two great centres of political power and civilization, Egypt and Mesopotamia, and just as the two currents passed over this country from the East and from the West, bringing about an exchange of civilization, so in the religious sphere, too, elements flowed together from all sides; here they crossed or here they were thrown into a common crucible, so that it is impossible to speak of Israel as possessing any independent importance of its own.

Which of these two views is the right one? Was the religion of Israel entirely unaffected by all other religions, or is it the mere product of the geographical position of Palestine? At any rate it cannot be denied that the Israelite religion has a great many points of contact with its various neighbours. In most of these

cases it is inconceivable to imagine that there was an entire absence of connection, even though the particular nature of the dependence or of the mutual relation is not at first sight clear.

A short summary calling attention merely to the various categories with which we are here concerned will enable us to obtain a fairly accurate impression of the vast extent of this common religious stock.

We may first of all notice the narratives at the beginning of the O.T. which formed so very important a part of the O.T. religion—the story of the creation of the world and especially the description of the flood. There can be no doubt that in the first there are certain elements which recur in the old Babylonian epos of the creation of the world and other creation myths; it cannot surely, *e.g.*, be a mere coincidence that the Babylonian narrative begins exactly like the two in the Bible.[1]

[1] Gen. i. 1 *seq.*, ii. 4 *seq.*

"Formerly, when above,
The heavens were not named;
Below, the dry land
Did not bear a name.
When the ocean, the primeval,
Their progenitor,
And the original flood, Tiamat,
The mother of both;
Still their waters
Were mingled together,
When no field as yet was marked off,
No marsh was to be seen;
Formerly when of the gods
None had yet been produced,
No name was called,
No fate decreed,
Then were created
The gods, etc."

And, again, the Babylonian-Assyrian story of the Flood is so exactly parallel to that of the O.T. that it is inconceivable that the two stories are independent, that there is no connection between them; we need but remind ourselves how the cuneiform version describes the sending forth of the birds from the Ark.

"Then I sent forth a dove
And let it loose;
The dove flew
Hither and thither;
But as there was no place of rest,
It again returned.

Then I sent forth a swallow — And let it loose;
The swallow flew — Hither and thither;
But as there was no place of rest — It again returned.
Then I sent forth a raven — And let it loose;
The raven flew, — Saw the waters decreased,
Eat, waded about, crowed, — But did not return."

We must not forget either that, like Noah, Ut-napistim, when he has been rescued, offers up a sacrifice as a thankoffering for his safety amid the universal destruction.

"The gods smelt the savour,
The gods smelt the sweet odour,
The gods gathered like flies around the sacrificer."

It is impossible that the O.T. version is the original, for the cuneiform version is much older, and goes back to a time when there was as yet no people of Israel, and, therefore, no Israelite version of the Flood. But, on the other hand, the Israelite version is no mere copy of the Assyrian-Babylonian, for the biblical narrative is stamped by the genuine characteristics of the Israelite spirit; and, besides, there are parallels amongst other

peoples as well. A very cursory comparison of the two versions proves the decided superiority of the biblical: yonder in Babel a crude polytheism, the single gods quarrelling with each other because the one called forth the flood and the other saved Utnapistim, while they cheat and deceive each other, and when the waters of the flood rise they cower together in fear on the edge of the vault of heaven howling like dogs, and then again, they swarm around the rescued hero, enticed like flies by the savour of the sacrifice; here in the O.T. a relatively high conception of the God who brought about the Flood. In the one case we have the raw material, in the other a relatively pure application of it.

Nor can the O.T. any longer establish its claim to a prerogative which at all times formed the pride of the Israelites—that is, the antiquity and the unique character of the law. The Book of Deuteronomy says: "What great nation is there that hath statutes and

judgments so righteous as all this law?" Now, as is well known, a code was discovered a short time ago (December 1901, January 1902) at Susa resembling the Israelite law in many points, but going back to a much older age than that of Moses. It is the civil code of Hammurabi, the mighty king of Babylon, (about 2250 B.C.), inscribed upon a block of black diorite rather more than two metres high. Through this law we can obtain a surprising insight into the stage of civilization which prevailed about 2000 B.C. in the south of Babylon, and into the ideas of equity which were then current, or were, at any rate, entertained as an ideal. We can see that even at that early date the same principles are laid down as prevailed later in Israel. The *Lex talionis*, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, etc.,[1] is already to be found in the code of Hammurabi.[2] But what is a great deal more striking is that life in Babylon about 2000 B.C. was far

[1] Ex. xxi. 24; Deut. xix. 21; Lev. xxiv. 20.
[2] Winckler, 196, 197.

more complicated, that civilization was far more advanced than in Palestine at the time when the corresponding laws were codified; for the Israelite legislation is concerned with nothing higher than the simple circumstances of a people of peasants engaged in tillage and the rearing of cattle. To mention but a single instance, surgery must already have attained to an important position in the science of medicine. An unsuccessful operation resulting in the patient's death is penalized by a heavy fine and forfeiture of the doctor's license. This much has at any rate been proved by the discovery of the code of Hammurabi, that the O.T. law cannot lay claim to a higher antiquity. While it is unnecessary to suppose that the one law was necessarily directly borrowed from the other, there is in both codes the application of the same principles which had developed at a very early date. Such, for instance, was the strict law of retaliation which was intended to restrain the wild extravagance of revenge or

the savage individual exercise of justice. On the other hand, it deserves to be noticed that in comparison with some crude and cruel features in the code of Hammurabi, a more humane tendency can be traced in many provisions of the law of Israel.

But the claim of antiquity may still be made, it may be said, on behalf of the ceremonial law, as there is no trace of this in the code of Hammurabi. This position is, however, untenable, for in the first place the oldest codification of the law in Israel, the so-called book of the covenant, contains practically no prescriptions concerning rites and ceremonies to be observed at the sacrifices or at the public worship generally; and, secondly, it has been known for some time past that the sacrificial rites of the Israelites in nowise differ from the customs prevalent in the East in ancient times, so that the Israelite cultus could be condemned by the prophets as actually heathen. The cultus is, therefore, the last place in which to look for

anything distinctively Israelitish as compared with the customs of the neighbouring peoples. Hence the Israelite ceremonial law cannot be quoted as a distinctive feature between the Israelites and the Gentiles; on the contrary, it belongs to the common stock of the peoples of antiquity. Even the two institutions of circumcision and the Sabbath, which one has been accustomed to regard as peculiarly characteristic of the Israelite religion, are of a non-Israelitic origin. Circumcision was shared by the people of Israel with nearly all the neighbouring peoples, with the exception of the Philistines. It probably made its way from Africa by way of Egypt to the tribes in the neighbouring portions of Arabia and Syria, whereas the Philistines, who had immigrated from the north, were unacquainted with it. It was only during the exile, when the Israelites lived amongst the uncircumcised, that it acquired its importance as a specific sign of adhesion to the community of Jahwe, and this importance it maintained after the

exile, whereas before, Jeremiah refused to see in it any real relation to Jahwe.[1] The case of the Sabbath is exactly parallel. In old times it is always mentioned side by side with the new moon festival; it can, therefore, scarcely be understood to mean anything else than the full moon.[2] We may find an additional reason for assuming this to be the old meaning of Sabbath in the fact that in Babylonian the corresponding word "Sapattu" (Sabattu) denotes not the seventh day but the full moon.[3] The weekly festival of the Sabbath only arose, therefore, by an artificial transmutation of the festival of the full moon, which was not peculiar to Israel alone. By the absolute rest which was then enjoined, it acquired an entirely different character to that of the old pre-exilic festival of the full moon Sabbath; it developed in an altogether peculiar manner and became the Jewish Sabbath, next to

[1] Jer. iv. 3, 4; Lev. xii. 3; Gen. xvii.

[2] Am. viii. 5; Hos. ii. 11; Isa. i. 13.

[3] Cp. Zimmern, *Nochmals Sabbat in Z. D. M. G.*, 1904. 458–460.

circumcision the most important institution of the Jewish religion.[1]

Just as the "stories" at the beginning of the O.T. and the law cannot be regarded as the peculiar property of the Israelites, so, too, no exclusive claim can be established on the psalms, the songs and hymns which form such a very precious treasure in the O.T. religion, in which Israelite piety has found so deep and striking an expression. For the Assyrian-Babylonian religion furnishes us with the most peculiar parallels. In the Babylonian psalms, too, the praises of God are sung; the sinner's cry for repentance proceeds from the depths of his soul; here, too, misery and misfortune call forth lamentation and weeping, and the heartfelt prayer for succour and for safety.

Even the name of God, Jahwe, which was accounted to be the holiest possession of the religion of Israel, was probably not at first the exclusive property of the Israelites. It is true that it is nothing more than a hypothesis that

[1] Cp. Meinhold, *Sabbat und Woche im A. T.*, 1905.

the name of Jahwe was borrowed from the Midianites or Kenites, and the Assyriologists still differ as to the right reading and interpretation of inscriptions which are said to contain the name Jahwe; still we must be prepared to find the name of Jahwe appearing in the oldest pre-Israelitic times in some place in Mesopotamia or in Palestine, and we must accustom ourselves to this conception. In the meantime it is an open question whether we really have instances of the name of Jahwe in the names Ja-u-um-ilu, Ja-Pi-ilu, Ja-'-Pi-ilu, which are met with in business documents of the age of Hammurabi—that is to say, about 2200 B.C.[1] In the same way it is doubtful whether the second part of the name Achi-ja-mi (which we may identify with Achi-ja-wi = Achijahu[2]), discovered by Sellin in the course of his excavations at Ta'annek, in a cuneiform letter which probably dates from

[1] Cp. Zimmern, *K. A. T.*, 3rd ed., 468, and cp. also *K. H. C. zum A. T.*, xiii. p. 109.

[2] 1 Kings xiv. 4.

about 1500 B.C., is to be connected with the divine name Jahwe.[1]

This brief review shows us that even such important elements of the Israelite religion as the tales at the beginning of Genesis, the whole law in its various component parts, institutions like circumcision and the Sabbath, which came later to be valued above all others, those deeply religious songs contained in the Book of Psalms, and perhaps even the name of God, Jahwe itself, are not peculiar to Israel, but form the common property of the Semitic peoples, or, at any rate, of some of them. This result cannot do otherwise than fill us with astonishment, but this astonishment is considerably increased when we turn our attention to less important elements as well as to individual features in the O.T. as it has come down to us. We are all of us surprised when we hear a story of the childhood of King

[1] Cp. Sellin. Tell Ta'annek (*Denkschriften der kaiserl. Akad. der Wissensch. in Wien, philos.-histor. Klasse*, Band I.), 1904, p. 115 *seq.*, and *Der Ertrag der Ausgrabungen im Orient*, 1905, p. 29.

Sargon of Agade, the founder of the Northern Babylonian kingdom about 2800 B.C., which resembles that of Moses, who at a much later age came to be the liberator and founder of the people of Israel. Sargon, an historical character, whose existence is known to us by contemporary documents and historical references as well as by his seal, is introduced as telling the story in his own person:

"I am Sargon, the mighty King of Agade; my mother was a vestal, my father of humble origin, and my father's brother inhabited the mountains. My native town was Azupiranu, which is situated on the banks of the Euphrates. My vestal mother conceived me, in secret she bore me, she laid me in an ark of bulrushes, she closed my door with slime and with pitch, she laid me in the river . . . . the river bore me down to Akki the irrigator. Akki the irrigator received me in the friendliness of his heart (?). Akki the irrigator brought me up as his child. Akki the irrigator made me to be his gardener.

Whilst I was working as his gardener Istar fell in love with me . . . . for many years I exercised dominion . . . . for many years I ruled over the black-headed and governed them."[1] Nor must we forget that this "typical legend of the founder of a dynasty"[2] recurs in all manner of variants and in all manner of countries and ages. We need but think firstly of the Egyptian-Phœnician legend. According to this story Osiris, who has been shut up in a chest and thrown in a river, swims to Phœnicia, where he is saved and called Adonis. Isis, who had come in search of him as far as Byblos, and had sat down in sorrow at a well's mouth, was there addressed by the maidservants of the royal house. Through their intervention she was received by the queen and became the nurse of her son.

Or, again, we may refer to the story in Herodotus,[3] according to which the founder

[1] *Cf.* Alfred Jeremias, *Das A. T. im Lichte des alten Orients*, 1904, pp. 255 *seq.*

[2] Winckler, *K. A. T.*, 3rd ed., 18.

[3] Bk. i. 113.

of the Persian empire, Cyrus, was ordered to be exposed by his grandfather in consequence of an interpretation of a dream, but he was saved by a herdsman and educated by him. Lastly, we may compare with these Eastern legends one from the West: Romulus and Remus, founders of the Roman empire, who passed as the sons of the vestal Rhea Silvia, and Mars, the god of war, were thrown into the Tiber in a basket immediately after their birth. The basket was caught in the roots of a fig-tree; there a she-wolf suckled the twins until they were discovered by Faustulus, the head herdsman.[1] This one example shows us how elements, which at first sight appear to us peculiar to the O.T., occur throughout the world. And so, in fact, elements come crowding in upon us from East and West, from North and South, which present a wonderful similarity with one or other of the biblical stories, or, at least, with an episode in them. As yet, it is true, no reference has

[1] A. Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp. 256 *seq.*

been discovered in Egyptian records to Joseph or to Moses, but in an old papyrus, dating from about 1250 B.C. [the so-called papyrus D'Orbiney], a story has been found which presents an exact parallel to that of the temptation of an adulterous woman as it is introduced in the narrative of Joseph's adventures. In the house of his married brother there lived a younger brother, who served the elder with the greatest fidelity, and all that he did prospered in his hand. Now it happened one day that the elder brother being absent, the younger returned to the house from the field in order to fetch seed, and his brother's wife tempted him. But he, being horrified, rejected her, and hastened back to his work upon the field without saying aught of what had occurred to his brother. In the evening, when her husband returned, his wife pretended to have been ill-treated by the younger brother. "Then the elder brother became as savage as a panther," and sought to kill his brother, but he was saved from his brother's

wrath.[1] In any case this old Egyptian story presents a remarkable parallel to the narrative of Joseph's temptation by the Egyptian woman, even though one is well aware that this same motive of the slanderous adulteress has been a favourite one both in the East and in the West, and has often been treated.[2]

A story similar to that which the O.T. tells us of the prophet Jonah is related in a Buddhist narrative of one Mitta-Vindaka, a merchant's son of Benares, who went to sea against his mother's will and was exposed by the sailors on a raft because the lot designated him as the cause that hindered the ship's journey.[3] There are several stories parallel to the story of Jonah in Greek literature.[4]

We cannot be astonished, therefore, when we

[1] *Cf.* Erman, *Ägypten*, pp. 505–508.

[2] *Cf.* Paulus Cassel, *Mischle Sindbad, Secundus Syntipas*[3], 1891, *esp.* pp. 1–24, and Fr. Baethgen, *Sindban oder die sieben weisen Meister*, 1878.

[3] *Cf. Z. D. M. G.*, 1896, 13.

[4] *Cf. K. H-C.*, xiii., p. 246.

see people at the present day bringing parallels together from every possible quarter, from India and from Greece, from Asia and from Europe, and inquiring as to the connection between them. Take, for instance, the numerous counterparts of the story of Job, who answers his wife's angry taunt, "Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity, renounce God and die?" with unruffled calm and serene wisdom. In all these cases a shrewish woman appears by the side of a patient sage. There is, first of all, the wise Tobit, who, with the sage's serenity, endures the mockery of his scolding wife Hannah as she taunts the blinded man: "Where is now thy mercy and thy kindness? Behold thou thyself art evidence of what avail all that has been." Then there is Thales, who, while he is star-gazing, falls into a well and the maidservant stands by and laughs. There is Buddha and the nun Cinča, who covers him with reproaches because she pretends to have been slighted by him. There is Socrates and Xanthippe, whose ill-

temper the philosopher endures with calm indifference.[1]

Much, it is true, is very uncertain in the case of these comparisons, and the relation that subsists between them may be a very different and a very complicated one that cannot be explained in the same way in all cases. We must also exercise very great care in weighing the evidence of such traditions, for supposing one were to discover in some African tribe at the present day stories similar to those contained in the Book of Genesis, it would by no means be impossible that a direct connection existed in historical times whereby the biblical stories have been brought to this tribe with their outline already firmly fixed. Here we should have, therefore, a case of direct borrowing of an already formulated story and not of a parallel. But it cannot be denied, that however individual and peculiar the shape may be which the parallels have assumed,

[1] *Cf.* K. Fries, *Philosophical Conversation from Job to Plato*, 1904, 103–106.

they may be traced back in the last resort to a common origin. Whether this common origin is ultimately to be found in the old oriental Babylonian astral myths and the idea that there is an exact correspondence between the earth below and the heavens above — an opinion which Winckler more especially maintains—is exceedingly improbable, for it is scarcely possible to suppose that all this mass of legends, common to so many peoples, arose in one and the same place, or that it appeared at one and the same time.[1]

However, the solution of this problem does not affect the matter with which we are here concerned. For this much at any rate is incontrovertible: we cannot settle the question by seeing nothing but what is original on the part of Israel and nothing but copies on the part of the other nations, nor by claiming for Israel at least the first literary embodiment of

[1] We may now compare especially the criticism of Winckler's thesis, by J. C. Matthes, *Israelitische Geschiedenis in Teyler's Theologisch Tijdschrift.*

the common property. For, after all, in every one of these parallel cases, whenever you wish to look upon the matter as exclusively Israelitic and peculiar to the Israelite religion, it appears to become subject to some solvent influences and vanishes while you are examining it. We cannot, therefore, escape the conclusion that the religious evolution of the people forms no exception to the general course of its history. In the sphere of religion, as in that of politics, influences came pouring in from all sides on the people that was settled in Palestine; it did not remain unaffected by the spiritual possessions of the Canaanites into whose country it had forced its way and established itself. It was stimulated to fresh activity by Egypt and Midian, and especially by Babylon and Assyria.

Thus it formed at once the bridge over which the spiritual possessions of the great nations who had attained a higher stage of civilization than the people of Israel passed hither and thither, and the centre in which

they met. We may, in short, infer from all that has been said that a very lively exchange of ideas took place amongst the nations of antiquity, and that Israel was not the last to take up the motives in this symphony of peoples and to be powerfully affected by them.

In spite of all that has been alleged, however; in spite of the fact that the Israelitic matter always seems to be on the point of turning into that which is common to the Semites generally, we should be altogether prejudging our case if we denied the religion of Israel its peculiar and unique character, and looked upon it as nothing more than the product of foreign influence or as an ordinary variant of the common Semitic religions. To realize how precipitate such a judgment would be, it is but necessary to reflect that Ammon, Moab, and Edom lived under essentially the same influences and traversed the same political history, but they have disappeared, and all that has remained of their religions is the name of

the deity they worship. But there is still another reason which should guard us against such precipitancy: for the unique character of a religion is to be judged not by the raw material which it possesses in common with others, but by the special stamp which it impresses upon it.

But if this is the case, then it will be all the harder to assign the Israelite religion its right place amongst the religions of antiquity, for the matter remains the same even though it may be increased by additions from without, but the stamp which is impressed upon it changes in the course of history. Now as far as we can see, the Israelite religion experienced greater changes than any other; it is never fixed, never stereotyped, but always subject to transformation. We may succinctly summarize these transformations by distinguishing four principal phases. First, at the time of the origin of the people of Israel the Israelite religion is that of a *Nomad* nation, a people of Bedouins. It is stamped with characteristics

which are traced back to Moses, and which manifest themselves especially clearly at the epoch of transition to the settled life of a peasant people in Palestine. For at that time the Israelites did not simply take over the peasant religion that was practized in Canaan, the distinctive features of the old Nomad religion are so powerful that the second phase of the Israelite religion, the *peasant* religion, is distinguished from the Canaanite peasant religion.

The old religion was therefore powerful enough to maintain itself; in fact, it remained so powerful that the *prophetic* religion which was founded by the great prophets appeared to be the continuation of that old beginning, and that the prophets looked upon themselves as merely carrying out and realizing the true intention of this old original Israelite religion. The last phase of this development was the *legal* religion, which may be looked upon as a compromise between the prophetic religion and that of the peasants. It does not, therefore,

present a homogeneous whole, but forms a kind of conglomerate in which elements have been taken up from the whole course of the nation's history.

As this legal stage is the last in the evolution, and as it has, up to the present day, been further developed by the adherents of the religion of Israel, but not surpassed, one is apparently justified in speaking of the Israelite religion as one usually does, *i.e.* as a legal religion, and in taking this phase of the Israelite religion as really characteristic of the nation's faith when it is compared with other religions; this, however, is not the case, the justification is only apparent. This is clearly proved by the fact that the cultus which played an important part at this stage of the nation's development is the very thing which is not peculiar to Israel, but was practised by the Canaanites and the Babylonians as well. But, further, we are bound to accept this conclusion when we realize that religion during this phase was very far indeed from presenting

any homogeneous features, but that under and in the law the after-effects of the prophetic ideal still continued to operate, and imparted an entirely peculiar individuality to this last period of the Israelite religion, legal religion though it be, so that we shall do better to speak of it as a legal religion, the warp of which was shot through with many prophetic elements. Lastly, the chronological sequence of the phases cannot of itself decide the question as to which presents the characteristics of the Israelite religion most markedly and enables us to realize its unique nature most decisively. The history of religion forms no exception to the laws of historical development. Here, too, progress is not denoted by a line which mounts uninterruptedly from the less to the more perfect. On the contrary, history varies like the tide; there are times when it seems to recede, times of retrogression in certain directions, just as we do not consider the particular form which Christianity has now assumed in Roman Catholicism, or in this or

that Protestant church, as the highest and the best, nor do we judge its essential character by that; so in our criticism of the Israelite religion we must try to discover the phase in which this religion is developed in its purity and entirety, and in which it manifests its peculiar characteristics most plainly.

Now there can be no doubt that it was in the prophets that this acme of the Israelite religion was attained. Firstly, we realize in their writings most clearly what it is that distinguishes the Israelite religion from that of other nations, and then we have already noticed that, while on the one hand the prophetic ideal reverted to the original intentions of the religion which Israel brought into the land of Canaan, and developed these in opposition to the religion of Canaan, so, on the other, this prophetic religion helped to impart a characteristic of its own to the legal phase of religion which succeeded it. We must turn to the prophets of Israel, then, if we would know the essence, the unique character

of the religion of Israel. Not only do we here come to the climax of the religion of Israel during the whole period before Christ, but its unique features are here presented most purely and clearly, to repeat once more what we have already said, in most unmistakable opposition to the religion of Canaan, as the continuation and magnificent development of the original religion of Israel, and as a mighty ferment which imparted a character of its own even to the legal religion and did not suffer the law to attain to the sole supremacy in Israel.

The mere juxtaposition of this, the perfect flower of the religion of Israel with the other religions of the East during antiquity, will not ensure a just and complete judgment as to the relation of these religions to each other. We must follow the course of history; we must take each phase by itself, and compare it with that religion with which it came into contact. Thus we shall be able to obtain a picture of the evolution of the religion of Israel and of its peculiar features in the

different stages which it traversed. We shall see how the Israelite religion developed amid influences from without and in reacting against them, and what were the decisive agencies which led it along the path it was destined to follow.

CHAPTER I

The Nomad Religion

We can only speak of an Israelite religion from the time when there was a people of Israel. It is not, of course, meant that this religion represents something absolutely new, which stands in no kind of relation to the past. On the contrary, however many marks of distinction there were, it was bound to be in closest connection with the past, to have taken over much of the earlier faith and merely to have modified and transformed it, for religion does not begin with the origin of a people, it already exists in the clans or families before they unite or coalesce to form a people.

In order to become acquainted with the peculiar nature of the oldest Israelite religion,

it is therefore important to discover on what soil and in what surroundings the people of Israel originated, and also to determine from what sources its different component parts flowed together.

Now there can be no doubt that the people of Israel was formed in the south of the land of Palestine. The Exodus from Egypt was the birthday, the peninsula of Sinai the birthplace, of the people of Israel. That is the recollection which Israel itself had preserved of the time of its origin. Before the sojourn in Egypt there only existed an Israelite family, but after this period it was an Israelite people that made its way into Palestine from the south or south-east. Before the conquest of Canaan the Israelites had no fixed dwelling-place; they wandered about the peninsula of Sinai as nomads until they succeeded in conquering a home of their own. The history of the making of Israel shows us, therefore, that the people was in touch with Egypt and the north of Arabia; and if we can trust these

early traditions at all, the relations with Egypt were predominantly hostile, while those with the Arabian nomads were friendly. At the beginning of Israelite history there is nothing but outspoken opposition to Egypt, whereas Israel and Midian, *i.e.* the Bedouins of the peninsula of Sinai, are united by the closest of ties. From this we may infer that in the sphere of religion also, closer points of contact may be expected with the North Arabian nomads than with the Egyptians.

The answer to the question as to the origin of the different component parts of which the people of Israel was composed must decide whether this expectation is fully justified. At first sight the O.T. religion appears to indicate the contrary. It points to the East, and not to the South, as the home of the ancestors of the people of Israel. It was from the East that the patriarch Abraham wandered into the land of Palestine, and when his descendants wish to return to their relations, they betake themselves to Mesopotamia. It is a question,

however, whether we have here a true historical recollection as to the origin of the ancestors of Israel, or whether we cannot arrive at a truer substratum under the mass of superimposed traditions. It is certain that in pre-Israelitic times Mesopotamia and Palestine were in very close connection with each other. Between 3000 and 2000 B.C., under Sargon the First of Agade, the political power of Assyria once reached as far as the Mediterranean, and the discoveries in Palestine, which date from pre-Israelitic times, have clearly proved that Babylonian civilization exercised a very great and far-reaching influence on the West. As evidence of this we may mention not only the cuneiform letters which came from Palestine, and have been discovered in the Egyptian archives of Amenophis III. and IV. in El-Amarna, but also the similar documents found by Sellin in Ta'annek. It would be possible, therefore, that these relations were reflected in the stories of the immigration of the patriarchs

from the East, the more so as we possess no knowledge from other sources of such voluntary immigration from Mesopotamia into Palestine; and further, these stories about the patriarchs would naturally only have taken shape when Israel was settled in the country and the tradition was developed and put back into the distant past.

Whether Abraham really came from Mesopotamia or not is, however, of no importance for the matter before us. For, in the first place, no nation arises by the mere increase of a single family, and it would only be from the south of Palestine that the kindred families would have come to join it; and, in the second place, it is extremely doubtful whether such a single family would have been able to preserve its character in the totally different surroundings of Syria and Palestine, and certainly not to impress it on its associates and kindred. As a matter of fact, the people of Israel presents far more similarity and relationship at the beginning of its history

with the North Arabians than with the inhabitants of Mesopotamia or even Northern Palestine.

It is, therefore, far more probable that the home of the elements which later coalesced to form the people of Israel was in Arabia, and it will be nearer the truth if we suppose a direct northern immigration into Palestine, with some digressions, no doubt, but not a complete diversion, by way of Babylon. This view, that Arabia was originally the home of the peoples of the Semitic world, harmonizes too, as Winckler[1] more especially reminds us, with the great movements of the peoples which are known to us in Hither Asia, and best accounts for the successive appearances of the Semitic peoples on the scene of history. We can readily understand that a country like Arabia is only capable of supporting a certain number of people, and that the surplus population should be forced to emigrate into the neighbouring

[1] Cp. his recent work, *Auszug aus der Vorderasiatischen Geschichte*, 1905, pp. 2–4.

fertile countries, whereas the hypothesis of a return to the inhospitable desert is neither probable nor can it be proved historically. The first migration of the surplus population of the desert turned to the nearest fertile country—that is to say, Mesopotamia ; it took place between 4000 and 3000 B.C., and resulted in the establishment of a Semitic population in the country of the Euphrates. About five hundred years later a second swarm had to leave the parent hive, and this migration lasted for rather more than a thousand years : it may be that the advance guard of this army turned again towards Babylon ; the main body, however, and the rear advanced to the north, and a portion turned aside, for a time, to Egypt, and there took up its abode. Amongst the component parts of this swarm of peoples we may mention the Phœnicians, the pre-Israelitic inhabitants of Canaan (the Amorites and the Canaanites), the Israelites, the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. Scarcely had this last group conquered a home for

themselves in the fertile country when the third wave began to break which brought the Arameans to the north. It came to an end with their settlement in Syria and in the north of Mesopotamia—that is to say, between the Babylonians and the Canaanites. This movement also lasted about a thousand years, from about 1500 to 500 B.C. Close in the track of the Aramean wave followed the Arabian, which lasted till the seventh century A.D., inundating the whole of the Semitic world, and extending even beyond Egypt to the Atlantic and to Europe.[1]

No other conclusion is therefore possible than that the origin and the religion of the people of Israel belongs to that second great movement by which the surplus population of Arabia was carried away to the north. Long after the forerunners of this migration had settled in Palestine, the Israelite people was formed in the south of Palestine by the coalition of a number of kindred clans. The

[1] Cp. Winckler, *op. cit.*, p. 3 *seq.*

connection of the Israelites with Egypt had only been transitory, and had also probably been limited in extent, whereas their connection with their nomad kindred from Arabia was constant. In order to understand the original religion of Israel, it will therefore, as we have already remarked, be of little use to turn to Egypt and the Egyptian religion. Although at least a portion of the ancestors of the later people of Israel sojourned for a time on Egyptian soil, and within the sphere of Egyptian power, no trace of Egyptian influence can be demonstrated in the oldest religion of Israel; whatever features in the later stages of development remind us of the Egyptian religion are to be referred with far greater probability to Egyptian influence during the Canaanite period than to original borrowing at the time of the Exodus. It is, in any case, unnecessary to presuppose a connection with Egypt in order to explain the presence of a sacred ark amongst the Israelites. For, on the one hand, the com-

parison of the ark of Jahwe with the box-like seats of Egyptian deities[1] is scarcely justified, for an ark and a seat are different things, and, on the other hand, there is no need of any particular reference to the Egyptian sacred ark[2]—D. Völter especially compares this Osiris (= Joseph) ark[3]—for sacred shrines were very generally used in the heathen religions: a plain proof of this even at the present day, as Stade reminds us,[4] is the employment of reliquaries in the Roman Catholic Church.

The history of the origin of the people of Israel shows us, therefore, that the oldest Israelitic religion is to be counted amongst its nearest neighbours, the old Semitic nomad religions. Now it would be easy to draw a picture of this religion had we at our disposal direct information dating from this earliest

[1] Cp. Meinhold, *Die Lade Jahwes*, 1900, and in *Theol. Stud. und Krit.*, 1901, 593–617.

[2] Cp. the picture of one in Erman, *Die aegyptische Religion*, 1905, 52.

[3] *Aegypten und die Bibel*, 1904², pp. 95 *seq.*

[4] *Biblische Theologie des Alten Testaments*, I. (1905), 117.

time; but we have no such original documents, either concerning Israel or the kindred nomad tribes: we are limited to later recollections and inferences as well as comparisons with the nomads who remained stationary in the old conditions. With these means at our disposal we must endeavour to set forth the difference between the original religion of Israel and that of the Semitic nomads from whom Israel issued.

Israel preserved many features of this early nomad age in its later history. It was not all that looked upon the transition to the life of a settled agricultural population in Palestine as an unmixed blessing. The bold song of Lamech[1] strikes our ear like an echo from the old times of the Bedouins, a time when the strict law of the *Jus talionis* was as yet unknown, when vengeance still had free play: just such a song one might have heard on the lips of a hero of the Arabian Antar romance or of any proud Bedouin chieftain:

[1] Gen. iv. 23 *seq.*

"Ada and Silla hear my words.
Ye, wives of Lamech, hearken unto my speech:
A man I slay for my wounds,
And a boy for my bruises;
Cain may avenge himself seven times,
But Lamek seventy and seven times."

Amongst the peasants too many clung to the customs of the old nomad life. Even as late as the time of Jeremiah the Rechabites despised wine and refused to plough the ground or to live in houses.[1] In the eyes of the prophets, the time before the immigration into Canaan was the age of Israel's love to Jahwe, and the entrance into the cultivated land was the beginning of corruption.[2]

Men have at all times been more conservative in the sphere of religion than in anything else. Rites and ceremonies are retained even when their original signification is no longer understood, or has actually had to make way for a new one. In this manner many characteristics of the nomad age were preserved with wonderful tenacity in the later

[1] Jer. xxxv.

[2] Cp., *e.g.*, Jer. ii. 2; Am. v. 25; Hos. ix. 10, x. 1.

stage of the religion of Israel; the old customs have even remained current among the inhabitants of the country when there was no longer any people of Israel. They have outlasted Judaism in those countries, and have not been ousted either by Christianity or by Mahomedanism. It is only quite recently that this fact has been established. We knew indeed, from the observations of Goldziher,[1] W. R. Smith,[2] Wellhausen,[3] and from the incidental remarks of travellers, what a flood of light is thrown upon the origins of the Israelites' religion by many ancient customs which are still current, especially amongst the Arabians before and after the rise of Islam, which merely covered these peoples with, as it were, a thin veneer; it is only, however, the systematic inquiries of S. I. Curtiss[4] that have revealed the amazing quantity of old

[1] *Muhammedanische Studien*, 1889 and 1890.

[2] *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*[2], 1894.

[3] *Reste arab. Heidentums*, 1887, [2]1897.

[4] *Ursemitische Religion im Volksleben des heutigen Orients*, 1903.

religious rights which have subsisted to this day in the East amongst the population of Syria and Palestine. The material needs, it is true, to be carefully sifted; it is not every ceremony that can be looked upon as having descended from old Semitic times in the dress which it wears to-day. But whoever is really acquainted with Semitic antiquity will have no great difficulty in removing the modern layers which have covered up in process of time the valuable ancient picture.

We must not forget either that even in the old Semitic nomad religion we have no unmixed and homogeneous whole. The nomad religion at the time of the origin of the people of Israel is not the original religion, not the beginning of religion altogether, it is the product of a long process whereby a whole mass of different elements has coalesced. Historical inquiry will hardly succeed in going back to the first origins; it has to begin its examination at some particular time accessible to history, and all that it can do is to conclude, from the

different nature of the elements, that their sources too were different, and that the various streams only gradually flowed into one. With this it must content itself until credible documents of an earlier period give accurate and complete information as to the religion of the past, or some other more certain way to analyse the later product has been discovered.

The most characteristic feature of the old Semitic nomad religion is polydemonism, *i.e.* the belief in divine (demonic) powers, in spirits. Many traces of this belief have been preserved in the O.T. religion, and also in the popular religion of the Syria and Palestine of to-day. It is scarcely necessary to mention instances in the O.T. of the belief in divine powers inhabiting stones, trees, springs, and animals. We may, however, refer to the sacred stone of Bethel, which gave the place its name, as it is called "a house of God" (bêt elohîm[1]); to the sacred oracular tree at Sichem[2]; to the

[1] Gen. xxviii. 22. [2] Gen. xii. 6; Deut. xi. 3.

sacred wells at Kadesh[1] and at Beersheba.[2] As for the belief in demonic animals, it will be sufficient to remind ourselves of the distinction between clean and unclean animals, which is to be explained not by any natural feeling of aversion, but only by religious scruples; there is also the Nehushtan,[3] the brazen serpent in the temple at Jerusalem, the origin of which is referred to the Nomad Age.

The Israelitic mourning customs are clear indications of the old belief in spirits; even though they are not all to be ascribed to the same time and do not all symbolize the same thoughts, yet one feature is common to all alike—a superhuman character is attributed to the dead. This is the case if, as is most probable, the original intention of the mourning customs was to protect oneself from the spirits of the dead. "The loud screams in the lamentation for the dead were intended to scare

[1] Gen. xiv. 7. [2] Gen. xxi. 28–30, 31.
[3] 2 Kings xviii. 4; Num. xxi. 4–9.

away the spirit. The mourning garments, the strewing of ashes on the head, the cutting off of the hair, the disfigurement and mutilation of the body, were all meant to make the mourners unrecognizable. The deceased man was to be prevented from recognizing those to whom he had stood in the most intimate relation, in case he should happen to return to his former surroundings. The tearing of the clothes is merely a device to disguise the mourners as quickly as possible. The covering up of the head or of the beard is meant to hinder the dead man's spirit from rushing into the mourner's body through his nose or his mouth, like some modern bacillus."[1] This explains, too, why great stone cairns were heaped up over the corpses of criminals; through the superincumbent mass their spirits were to be confined to the earth, and so protection would be secured against them.[2]

[1] Cp. Beer, *Der biblische Hades in Theol. Abhandlungen.* Festgabe für H. T. Holtzmann, 1902, 16 *seq.*

[2] Compare Josh vii. 26, viii. 29; 2 Sam. xviii. 17 (*vide* Beer, *op. cit.*, 18).

At the time of the origin of Israel it is probable that fear of the spirits of the dead had ceased to be operative amongst the mass of the people; the relation to the dead had probably become a more familiar one, so that men did not primarily endeavour to protect themselves against them, but rather wished to remain in some kind of connection with them. The old customs which continued unchanged lost their deterrent character. They were understood and explained as symbolizing a sacramental union with the dead, and others were added which possessed these characteristics still more plainly. Such, for instance, was the offering up of sacrifices and gifts to the deceased. The belief in the demonic power of the dead remained unimpaired; they are the "elohîm" and the "knowing ones" (Jiddĕonim) who know the future and determine the fate of their descendants and relations who live upon the earth. Hence by means of oracles one can derive information from them as to the course of future

events.[1] We cannot, therefore, be surprised that worship was offered up to the dead and to heroes, and that the tombs of ancestors and heroes so often appear as places of worship, as, *e.g.*, the grave of Miriam at Kadesh.[2]

It is in connection with this worship paid to ancestors and the dead that the family and the clan appear as associations for purposes of worship. As an instance of this we may mention the very frequent occurrence of personal appellations, which contain, besides the name of God, a second element expressing a degree of relationship—that is to say, they go back originally to a time when the Deity was regarded as a relation of the bearer of the name, *e.g.* as father,[3] brother,[4] uncle,[5] or cousin.[6] The family continued to be an association for purposes of worship for a long time after the conquest. An instance of this is the family festival of the kindred of Jesse at

[1] 1 Sam. xxviii.; Isa. viii. 19, xxviii. 15, 18; Deut. xviii. 10 *seq.*

[2] Num. xx. 1.

[3] Cp. Abiel, 1 Sam. ix. 1.

[4] Ahiah, 1 Sam. xiv. 3.

[5] 'Ammiel, 2 Sam. ix. 4.

[6] Dodo, Judges x. 1.

Bethlehem.[1] The effects of this old institution can be traced even in very late O.T. times.[2]

Naturally a great deal was believed and practised in the stage of polydemonism, which was considered later to be superstition and magic; and many sacred customs known to us from the O.T.—*e.g.* the taking off of sandals in a sacred place,[3] the changing or cleansing of one's clothes before performing a sacred action[4]—go back to the Nomad Age, as is proved by their presence amongst the heathen and Moslem Arabs. It would be impossible here to mention all the single instances, but it is important to remember, as a striking characteristic of the nomad religion, that sacrifices were very far from playing the important part they did later. Sacrifices were offered, no doubt, but by no means as frequently as in later times. They were rare festivals; it was only on quite especial occasions that sacrifices were offered. For the most part it will have

[1] 1 Sam. xx. 6.
[2] Zech. xii. 12–14.
[3] Ex. iii. 5; Josh. v. 15.
[4] Gen. xxxv. 2; Ex. xix. 10.

been some grievous calamity, *e.g.* sickness of man or beast, against which they sought to protect themselves or which they tried to avert. If we may judge by all that is still told us of the Arabian Bedouins, and that is still practised to-day in Palestine and Syria, blood played an important part in these ceremonies. The doorposts and the lintel of the house were smeared with it as at the Pesach,[1] or the necks and the flanks of animals, as the Bedouins do to this day in times of cattle-plague, or a mark was made in the sacred place with the blood of the sacrifice, as still happens in Palestine.[2] The conception of sacrifice was therefore different to what it came to be later; it was not as yet considered as a gift which was brought to the Deity in order to dispose it favourably, but as a means of establishing a close connection with it and of obtaining the clearest possible proof of the relationship with it, and of symbolising this in

[1] Ex. xii. 21–23, 27*b*.

[2] Cp. Curtiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–226.

a vivid manner. There was a sacramental communion between the Deity and its worshippers by means of blood. The custom will probably have come down from the earliest times, when the demons were mostly supposed to inhabit the earth, of letting the blood of the sacrifice flow down to the earth or through a runnel into some subterranean cavity. We can easily understand that at this stage of religious development no altars were needed, and that the arrangements for the places of sacrifice—for this is what the altars were originally—were very primitive. A single natural boulder [1] was sufficient for the purpose, and it is clearly a survival from the old time when the oldest law in Israel only allowed "altars," *i.e.* sacrificial sites, to be of earth or unhewn stones.[2]

It is not easy to say what were the predominant feelings called forth amongst the Semitic nomads by this religion. It is extremely improbable, however, that it was

[1] 1 Sam. xiv. 33. [2] Ex. xx. 24–26.

especially fear which filled the Semites in the presence of the divine powers. For these powers were not only such as did them harm; there were beneficent deities too, who afforded them protection and prosperity, not only by leading them to precious springs and fruitful oases in the midst of desolate regions, but also by taking the family and the clan under their protection. And, besides, the means of averting any harm that might be inflicted were well known, and so, too, were the means of keeping open communication with the friendly demonic powers. It cannot be said, however, that any trace of a moral influence exercised by these divine powers on their worshippers is to be noticed. For they were entirely lacking in the characteristics of personality; and they continued to suffer from this defect, even though, in course of time, some acquired real personal names. All that we can assume is that if different tribes possessed a common site for their cultus, either in some oasis or on a mountain, they were bound to a truce of God,

to friendly intercourse, and to a cessation of all hostility within the sacred precincts and in the sacred time.

Such are the general characteristics which mark the heathen nomad religion, such is the soil in which the people of Israel grew up, such the foundation upon which the Israelitic nomad religion was built up. The distinctive features of this latter religion must now be set forth. The most striking is this: the Israelites have a God whom they consider to be their God, while they look upon themselves as His people. It is true that faith in the divine powers continued to exist concurrently, but the God who cares for the existence of the people of Israel and for their wellbeing, He who has cognizance of the concerns of the whole nation, is Jahwe. He is the God of the people of Israel, and Israel is His people.

It is difficult as yet to determine exactly what the name of "Jahwe" signified originally; but it is equally difficult to suppose that the Israelites, from the very first, connected with

it the meaning of "existence."[1] More important than the original significance of the name is the question as to its origin, for it is not a genuine Israelitic word, as might seem to be the case when one considers the subsequent limitation of its use to Israel. We may indeed neglect the uncertain traces of its use in Babylon and in pre-Israelitic Canaan.[2] But the Israelitic tradition itself closely connects Moses, the creator of the people of Israel and the founder of the Israelitic religion and its priesthood, with the priest of the Midianites, his father-in-law,[3] and ascribes the impulse to his work of liberating the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage to Jahwe, the God of Sinai (Horeb), in the land of the Midianites.[4] It is also extremely probable that we may infer from the story of Cain and Abel[5] that the Kenites, who continued to live as nomads even in later times amongst the Israelites when they

[1] Ex. iii. 14.
[2] Cp. *supra*, p. 16 *seq.*
[3] Ex. ii. 21, xviii.
[4] Ex. iii.
[5] Gen. iv. 2–16*a*.

had settled in the land of Canaan, bore as their tribal mark the sign of Jahwe, which served as a protection to them, but is also a proof that they worshipped Jahwe in very early times; and this is corroborated by the fact of their close relationship with the Midianites.[1] We may infer, therefore, that the name of Jahwe was originally attributed to the God of the Mount of Sinai (Horeb)—that is, that it betokens the God who was supposed to dwell there, and it may very well be supposed that He was conceived as the God of the higher sphere, as the God of the air and of storms as distinguished from the divine powers of the earth more properly so called. This is the conception, too, which best harmonizes with the modes of His revelation as they are represented to us—cp. the burning bush,[2] the thunder and lightning,[3] as well as that representation of the theophany, under the picture of a storm, which remained

[1] Judges i. 16, iv. 11; cp. Stade, *Das Kainszeichen in Z. A. T. W.*, 1894, 250–318.

[2] Ex. iii. 2–5. [3] Ex. xix.

a constant favourite. Besides the Kenites, the different tribes which in later times composed the people of Israel evidently stood in relation to Jahwe of Sinai (Horeb). Probably Mount Sinai was the central place of assembly and the common place of worship of different Semitic tribes whilst they sojourned in those districts. Afterwards some of these tribes passed over into Egypt, and Moses appeared amongst them as the messenger of Jahwe, the God of their fathers.[1]

But even though Jahwe was originally the name of the God of Sinai, it immediately received a higher significance under the Israelites than that which it had possessed as the God of the confederate tribes of Mount Sinai. The reason is this: Jahwe manifested Himself in history by the liberation of the Israelites from the Egyptian bondage, He led them safely to Kades, and there united them with the kindred tribes to form one people. A further reason is to be found in

[1] Ex. iii. 16.

the fact that He not only fortified Israel in its external relations, but guided the internal affairs of the young people to a prosperous issue, making wise arrangements for the federation of the different tribes, which did not, however, involve the abandonment of their own tribal constitution, and regulating the relations of the different members of the people to each other. It was the holy place at Kades where the first stage of the work of the liberation and development of the people of Israel, which had been begun in Egypt, was completed. In this neighbourhood the Israelites sojourned for a long time. The instrument which Jahwe used in order to make known His power both in Egypt and at Kades was Moses, the leader of the people and the prophet. He is the first in the series of those great men of Israel whom we call prophets. He belongs to this series, for he was not a writer, nor primarily a law-giver, even though he directed the people by word of mouth in the name of Jahwe at the holy place, but he is only rightly under-

stood when he is conceived as a prophet whose work originated in the divine revelation, whose purpose was the establishment of the divine power, and whose method was the proclamation of the divine will.

Thus the religion of Israel was founded, and, at the same time, that most important development was initiated which leads up through the later prophets to Jesus Himself. From the very beginning, in the nation's infancy, we can already trace the germ and potentiality of the future magnificent development. The nation's very first steps were taken in the direction which led to the highest goal: this we realize as we notice, firstly, that the ideal of later ages is nothing else than the further development of principles laid down by Moses, and, secondly, that in the ethical demands which the prophets made they were conscious of being in harmony with the origins of the religion of Israel. The emphasis which was laid upon this social and ethical side of the religious demands, in consequence of the concurrent formation of the

people and of the religion of Israel, and the purity which characterized the ethical aspirations of the nation, distinguish the religion of Israel, even at this early time, not only from the nomad religions of the Semitic heathen, but also from the religions of Moab and of Ammon, which also possessed a tribal god. The contents of the second part of the double proposition, Jahwe the God of Israel and Israel the people of Jahwe, and the demands which it included, elevate Jahwe far beyond the category, not only of the demonic deities of the common Semitic nomad religion, but also of the tribal gods of the religions of Ammon and of Moab, and impart a markedly peculiar character to the religion of Israel from the earliest days. Jahwe is the God of the people of Israel, not absolutely the only God; there exist beside Him not only the divine powers that were worshipped in earlier times, but also the gods whom foreign tribes or other groups of peoples regarded as their tribal or national gods. But Jahwe's claims on His

people were of a quite peculiar nature; there was nothing like them anywhere else, or, at any rate, He demanded their fulfilment with a peculiar emphasis.

If we bear these distinctive features of the Israelite nomad religion in mind, we shall not be surprised to find that sacrifice occupied a comparatively unimportant place in it. Sacrifices were, it is true, probably offered up from time to time to Jahwe, and not only to the demonic powers, but the little importance which is attached to them is evident from the fact that the prophets could maintain that in the desert no sacrifices had been offered up to Jahwe,[1] and even that at the Exodus Jahwe had laid down no regulations in matters of sacrifice.[2] We are told, too, and the statement harmonizes with the preceding account, that originally it was not the priest's task to sacrifice; they had other things to do; it was open to anyone to sacrifice. The priest's office was rather to make known the will of the Deity to

[1] Am. v. 25. [2] Jer. vii. 22.

inquirers, and to give them directions how to solve the various problems which life presented to them—how to interpret the omens which they came across, and, supposing they portended anything evil, how it was to be averted. So it had been among the nomads, and so it was now among the new people of Israel. Jahwe's priest—he that revealed the will of Jahwe to the people—was the prophet Moses; he was not only His chief priest, but, at the beginning, His only priest. Later on he had successors, whose office was to continue his work in his spirit. To interpret Jahwe's directions to the people, that was the task of the priests of Jahwe; for many years to come they had nothing to do with the celebration of the sacrifices, just as little as had the old priests of the divine powers. The prophet and the priest did not stand in opposition to each other originally.

Many portions of the Semitic nomad religion were naturally thrust into the background at the advent of the faith in

Jahwe as the God of Israel. Thus the power of the "demons" was bound to decline, their influence was circumscribed, and gradually they degenerated into mere jinns and pale ghosts. Beside Jahwe the God of the whole people, both without and within, no single one of them was able to attain to any prominence, to any importance approaching that of Jahwe. Either they continued to be worshipped clandestinely and in secret or they were degraded to demons in the later sense of the word, or else—there was no other alternative—their worship was merged in that of Jahwe. There was thus no soil in Israel in which polytheism could take root. A great many practices that were taken over from the old Semitic times lost their original significance in the course of the transfer, or had already been emptied of their meaning more or less; as instances we may mention the mourning customs and many others that were originally connected with the old Semitic religion. In other cases, however, the transition to the

Israelite religion was marked by elevation into a higher sphere. This was a process which continued to occur in after times as well, and thereby many things that were taken over from their pagan forefathers were legitimized amongst the later Israelites. The most important instance of this process in the earliest age of the Israelite religion is connected with the sacred ark. The origin of the ark is probably to be placed a good deal earlier than the time of the founding of the Israelite religion; for though this religion was perfectly distinct from the Semitic nomad religion, it shared the use of the ark with many of its Semitic nomad neighbours.[1] The sacred shrine dates, therefore, from pre-Mosaic times; it either belonged to the most important tribe in the Israelite confederacy or to the pre-Mosaic cult of Jahwe. In any case it acquired a new significance; it came to be the sanctuary of Jahwe, the God of the people of Israel. The presence of Jahwe is bound up with that of

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 44.

the sacred ark, Jahwe the God of Israel and not any other Semitic deity of olden times, Jahwe as His prophet Moses revealed Him and not as His pre-Mosaic worshippers understood Him. A similar process of transmutation took place in many other instances: old institutions, rites, and ceremonies were brought into connection with Jahwe. Sometimes the transformation was very gradual, and was only effected at a late period in the course of the people's history: as instances of this we may mention, the laws relating to food[1] and to circumcision.[2]

The Israelite nomad religion stands out in striking contrast from the background of the common Semitic nomad religion from which it originated. Compared with the common polydemonism, it is a prophetic popular religion. Jahwe is the God of the people, and the internal social development is His concern as well; that is why the germs which in after times developed so clearly into ethical demands

[1] Deut. xiv. 1–21. [2] *Vide supra*, p. 14.

existed in the infancy of the religion of Israel. By the side of Jahwe the people of Israel is not allowed to honour any other god as its god. The old deities recede, and there is no room for polytheism, for the belief in many gods as the gods of the people of Israel. Other peoples may have their own gods; Israel's God is Jahwe, and none other is to be worshipped beside Him. Monolatry is the hall-mark of the old Israelite faith.

CHAPTER II

The Peasant Religion

The Israelites came into a new world when they entered into Canaan. The inhabitants whom they found in the country had once been nomads; like themselves they had been in the vanguard of that great migration of peoples to which the Israelites also belonged, which had thrust one nation after another in a northerly direction out of Arabia. But they had now been settled for many centuries in the country, and had in the meantime abandoned their nomad life, having become an agricultural population in accordance with the requirements of the nature of the land. They lived in towns which were surrounded with walls, and also in open villages.

When the Israelites appeared on the borders of Palestine they found that the country had already attained to a stage of civilization which must have appeared very considerable to these immigrants from the desert; it had for some time past been exposed to the influences exercised by the old centres of civilization, Egypt and Babylon. This fact has been definitely established by the recent excavations in Palestine, although we are really only at the beginning of this enterprise, and thus the result of the discoveries at El-Amarna in Egypt has been completed in a very welcome manner. The inscriptions there found proved that Babylonian cuneiform was known in Palestine as early as about 1400 B.C. For amongst the letters discovered at El-Amarna, in the archives of the kings Amenophis III. and IV., there are some written by the king Abdi-Chiba of Jerusalem (Urusalim), and other Palestinian vassals, to their Egyptian overlord. Quite apart from the historical value of the contents of these letters—they present a very

vivid picture of the chaotic confusion of political circumstances in Palestine just before the arrival of the Israelites—the mere fact that Palestinian princes wrote to the Pharaoh on clay tablets in the Babylonian cuneiform and in the Assyrian language affords us irrefutable evidence of the important influence exercised at this early date by the Babylonian-Assyrian civilization in the nearer East. It is Sellin's discovery of the little archive of the Prince of Ta'anak Ištarwašur, however, which he found in the course of his excavations at Tell-Ta'annek, and which belongs to about the same period as the letters of El-Amarna, that proves the very far-reaching extent of this influence, and that shows us that the Assyrian-Babylonian writing and language were not confined to international intercourse and the use of diplomatists. At least twelve tablets in cuneiform have been brought to light, containing partly letters exchanged between different princes in Palestine, partly lists of names, *e.g.* of the

contingents which different places had to furnish to the army.[1]

Besides this, however, it has been clearly established that Egyptian influence was by no means insignificant. The most interesting evidence of this twofold current from the south as well as from the north is contained in the seal-cylinder of a Canaanite discovered by Sellin at Ta'anak. It contains a Babylonian picture of two figures of deities, or perhaps of a deity and a priest, with a Babylonian legend, "Atanachili, son of Chabsi, servant of Nergal," and also a column covered with Egyptian hieroglyphics, the sign of life, and underneath a bird. This seal is supposed to date from the year 2000 B.C.[2] As evidence of the influence exercised by Egypt in ancient times, we may mention the scarabs, which have hitherto been discovered in great quantities wherever excavations have been undertaken in

[1] Cp. Sellin, *Tell Ta'annek*, 1904, 113–122, and *M. u. N. des D. P. V.*, 1905, 33–37.

[2] *Op. cit.*, 27 *seq.*

Palestine, and "which are almost as characteristic of the adherents of the Egyptian religion as the cross is of those of the Christian."[1] The excavations undertaken by the English, the inscriptions and pictures of Egyptian deities which they have brought to light at Tell-es-Safi and Gezer, prove that this Egyptian influence was especially active in the south; but at Ta'anak, too, Sellin[2] has discovered the Egyptian god Bes in a figure made of bright green porcelain; and besides this, the discoveries that have been made thus far, establish the fact that the influence of Egyptian civilization during this early period (from 2000–1000 B.C.) lasted longer than the Babylonian, and that it was still very strong at the time when Israel conquered the country. This conclusion is in complete harmony with all that the O.T. tells us as to the history of Israel.[3]

But if Palestine was exposed in such a

[1] Erman, *Ägypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum*, 427.

[2] *Op cit.*, 88 *seq.*

[3] Cp. Sellin, *Der Ertrag der Ausgrabungen im Orient*, 1905, 25–29.

measure and during so long a time to the influence of the Babylonian and Egyptian civilization, then we may infer from this fact that the degree of culture to which the inhabitants of the land had attained was by no means inconsiderable. Very much, no doubt, came over into Palestine from Babylon and from Egypt of which no direct traces are any longer to be obtained. Sellin rightly reminds us that if one nation borrows another's script, this implies an exceedingly active intellectual intercourse and a very considerable exchange of ideas between the two peoples. The art of writing in the borrowed script had to be taught and learnt. Whether the teachers came from Babylon to Palestine, or the scholars travelled from Palestine to the Euphrates, in either case portions of the Babylonian-Assyrian literature thus became known to the inhabitants of Palestine during the writing lessons; nor was their knowledge limited to their copy-book headings; but we may be sure that a great deal was imparted to them orally by the Baby-

lonians. When once such connections had been established, then it was not only writers who travelled from one country to another, but petty traders and merchants as well; and these did not merely seek to sell their wares, but furthered the exchange of ideas. We ought not, therefore, to be astonished to find parallels on the Euphrates or the Nile to portions of the later Hebrew literature, or that allusions should occur which can only be explained by presupposing Babylonian or Egyptian traditions.

If the civilization of the inhabitants of Palestine differed from that of the Israelite nomads, their religion, too, was distinct from that of Israel. All that can be inferred in this matter from the O.T. is confirmed by the excavations, which complete our knowledge and render it extraordinarily vivid.[1]

In the first place, it has been established that

1 Sellin has summarized the results both in *Tell Ta'annek*, pp. 103–112, and also in *Der Ertrag der Ausgrabungen im Orient*, pp. 29–33.

the Canaanites worshipped a number of gods; thus the names Hadad and Bel (= Baal), Istar (= Astarte), and Aschirat have been deciphered in documents; besides this we have Amon from Egypt and Nergal from Babylon, whose servant the Canaanite Atanachili son of Chabsi calls himself on the seal-cylinder that we have just described.[1] The only picture of these gods that can be identified with certainty hitherto is that of Astarte; it exists in many copies and under various forms, mostly made of clay, but sometimes also of bronze. The form seems to have varied according to the different towns (the Astartes of Ta'anak have a crown, those of Lachis have nothing on the head, and two of Gezer, as well as one of Ta'anak, have horns). Almost everywhere Astarte is to be recognized as the mother of life by the holding up of the breasts. The remaining pictures of gods represent Egyptian deities: Bes, Ptah, Secht, Isis, with the child Horus; but these were probably worshipped

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 75.

only by Egyptians established in the country and not by Canaanites.

Furthermore, the excavations have proved that the practice of offering up children in sacrifice prevailed to a very large extent among the Canaanites. So, too, the building sacrifice must have been customary—the offering up of a human being as a sacrifice to the demon of the site of the house.[1] Sacrifices were also in all probability offered up to the dead, for various arrangements have been discovered which can scarcely have served any other purpose than to conduct the libations to the dead man's grave.

The various rock altars exposed by the excavations, or still to be found on the earth's surface, are of great importance. They are altars constructed in the manner which was forbidden by the old Israelite law[2]; for however primitive they are compared with the later artificial constructions, they have been hewn out of the rock and provided with a

[1] 1 Kings xvi. 34. [2] Ex. xx. 25 *seq.*

step.[1] Altars of this kind have been found in various places, that of Petra deserving especial mention.[2] Very numerous Massebahs have been discovered in the course of the excavations. These stone pillars, hewn monoliths, were taken to be the symbols of the holy places, as they were originally thought to be the abode (whether permanently or for a season) of the deity that was there worshipped. In later times they were prohibited by the law as being of Canaanite origin.[3] We may here already make mention of the altar of incense which Sellin has discovered. It is in the shape of an ordinary conical baking oven, gradually narrowing towards the top, and provided with the necessary holes for ventilation. It belongs, it is true, to the Israelite period, but it contains mythological representations

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 57.

[2] Cp. George L. Robinson, *M. u. N. des D. P. V.*, 1901, 21–32; H. Guthe, *ib.*, 1905, 49–56; S. T. Curtiss, *Ursemit. Rel.*, 1903, 307–325; and R. E. Brünnow and A. v. Domaszewski, *Die Provincia Arabia*, 1904, i. 239–247.

[3] Cp. Deut. xii. 3.

which clearly go back to an earlier period. This earlier date certainly applies to the two pictures in relief. The first of these represents a little boy killing a serpent, which stands upreared before him with open mouth. On the other we see a tree, and on either side are two mountain goats climbing up a hill and turning round their heads to snap at the top of the tree. Of a like earlier date are the winged animal shapes with faces of men or of lions, which are on either side of the altar in relief. All these pictures remind us of foreign Babylonian-Assyrian myths and mythological figures, of the myths of the slayers of serpents or dragons, of the tree of life with the creatures surrounding it, and of the mythological figures of the cherubim, or even of the colossal Assyrian bull with the human head. If we further remember the ram's horn, the symbol of Baal, then this altar enables us to realize a very important chapter in the history of religion. It represents and embodies the influence of the Assyrian-Babylonian and the

old Canaanite religions on Israel. The great quantities of scarabs and pearls which served amongst the Canaanites and Israelites as amulets, prove, as we have already mentioned, that the influence of Egypt was likewise not inconsiderable.

The information which we derive from the excavations, concerning the religion of the Canaanites, with whom the Israelites came into contact when they left the desert, is exceedingly valuable. The stage of the mere belief in demons is past. It is true that they believe, and that very firmly, in all manner of demons and spirits; this is proved by the numbers of amulets, and also by the human sacrifice that is offered up at the building of a house. But individual deities stand out from the great mass of demons, and these were plainly imagined to be personal gods, such as Astarte and Baal by the side of Hadad and Aschirat. It is impossible to infer from the discoveries that have been made, what especial sphere of influence they occupied, even though, as

we have already mentioned, the pictures of Astarte would lead one to gather that she was worshipped as the mother of life; on the other hand, it is certain that the sacrificial system was very greatly developed. This is proved by the great number of skeletons of children that have been found lying side by side, and which certainly point to the practice of the sacrifice of children, perhaps of the first-born. Besides this, we have the numerous arrangements for altars which have been discovered. It may certainly be inferred, from the fact of human sacrifice, that libations, and especially blood-libations, played an important part in the cultus. More than this cannot be definitely established as regards the cultus and its rites and ceremonies: we may, however, possibly infer from the arrangements of several altars[1] that the Canaanites offered sacrifices to the dead.

This picture of the Canaanite religion may be completed from the O.T. In the first

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 80.

place O.T. names of places that come down to us from pre-Israelitic times are of importance, for they tell us something of the religion which once prevailed in the country. It is unimportant how far back they go in this earlier period, in any case they show us what influences were at work among the population of the country. Thus we may infer from the name Bet-šemeš (= house of the sun [1]) that the sun was once worshipped in Canaan, even though we cannot decide whether Babylonian or Egyptian influence was here at work, or whether the one prevailed after the other or both operated together. The horses of the sun, which were later worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, do not come under this category, for they are to be traced to a later borrowing from the Assyrians in the reign of Manasseh.[2] In fact, the Babylonian-Assyrian worship of the host of heaven (the sun, the moon, planets, etc.) had made its way into Judea before

[1] 1 Sam. vi. 9.
[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 5, 11.

Josiah's reign.[1] Similarly names of places, such as Bet-'Anat[2] and 'Anatot, prove that in old times the Phœnician goddess 'Anat had worshippers in Canaan, though we cannot decide with certainty whether this name is to be identified with Antu, the wife of the Babylonian god Anu.[3] Again, in the name Be-'eštera,[4] which is probably to be identified with Bet-'Eštera, *i.e.* house of Ištar, we have a new proof of the worship of the goddess Ištar. Lastly, the name of the place Ṣaphon[5] reminds us of the Phœnician god of the same name, and in Ba'al-Gad[6] and Migdal-Gad,[7] the second part probably denotes Gad, the goddess of fortune,[8] which can be traced in proper names in nearly all the Semitic peoples, and is perhaps contained in the Hebrew tribal name Gad.[9] Several other deities have therefore been wor-

[1] Cp. Zeph. i. 5; also Deut. xvii. 3; Jer. viii. 2; Ez. viii. 16 *seq.*

[2] Judges i. 33.

[3] Cp. *K. A. T.*[3], 353.

[4] Jos. xxi. 27.

[5] Judges xii. 1.

[6] Jos. xi. 17.

[7] Jos. xv. 37.

[8] Cp. Isa. lxv. 11.

[9] Cp. *K. A. T.*[3], 479.

shipped in Palestine besides those that have been made known to us by the excavations.

The O.T. also furnishes us with further indications concerning the nature of the cultus that was practised in Palestine by the Canaanites that were conquered by Israel. Even though all this information comes down to us from a very much later period, and even though the writers are only acquainted with the product, the result of the mixture of the Israelite and the Canaanite religion, yet in very many cases the recollection of that which was originally foreign persisted in undiminished force, and later, as is well known, the attempt was made to purify the Israelite religion from the heathen leaven. We may also recognize the new additions by a comparison of the religion which Israel brought into the country with that which it possessed after it had lived in Canaan for some centuries, and so we are able to determine what must have been the nature of the Canaanite religion which influenced Israel.

The chief mark of distinction between the religion of Israel in the desert and in Canaan is the cultus. In the one case it was almost entirely absent, Jahwe demanded no sacrifices[1]; in the other He is honoured frequently and zealously with sacrifices, great festivals are regularly celebrated in His name, and throughout the whole country He possesses many sanctuaries. There can be no doubt about it, the sacrificial cultus is in its main features a Canaanite institution appropriated by Israel after the conquest. Thus the prophets regarded it: the Deuteronomic law, with its prohibition of the sacred places outside of Jerusalem, concurs in this judgment, and between the lines of the old stories, too, which legitimized the various sacred places in Canaan by apparitions of Jahwe to the patriarchs, we can clearly read the object — to prove Jahwe's right to the sacrificial places in Canaan. But the cultus is most intimately connected with the

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 66.

practices of agriculture; the festivals are agricultural festivals which are adapted to the nature of the land and intimately connected with the soil. There is nothing in the cultus, therefore, which is inconsistent with the theory of Canaanite origin, and many individual features connected with these festivals clearly arose outside of Israel. Thus there can be no doubt that the institution of the Kedeshas who offer themselves up in honour of the Deity in the sacred place is to be derived from a Canaanite custom, and the license which usually prevailed during the festivals in the sacred places has more in common with the glad thanksgiving festivals for rich harvest in field and vineyard (festivals which arose in the fruitful plain) than with the sacrificial feasts in the desert, which were of a more serious character, because, for the most part, they were occasioned by calamities, which had to be averted. The simplicity of the desert must, of course, have been abandoned for some time past in the external arrangement of the holy places when the festivals were of

such a merry nature and recurred so frequently; fixed altars came to be the rule; and, soon, covered buildings will have been erected at the more important holy places, both for the Deity, which was represented in some kind of image, and for the worshippers. There is no trace of any ennobling influence exercised by the Canaanite religion on the morals of its adherents, nor can such be expected when Kedeshas and license prevailed in the very centre of the religion.

The Canaanite peasant religion, with which the Israelites came into immediate contact, is therefore no simple and homogeneous whole, but is composed of the most varied elements. Amongst the oldest elements which the Canaanites themselves formerly brought with them from the desert is polydemonism—the belief in the more or less constant presence of spirits in all manner of living beings or dead objects. This belief in spirits and in their magic influence did not meet with anything to hinder its

development. On the contrary, many foreign influences furthered its growth, and all that it met with in the country contributed to make it prevail. The influence of the Babylonian-Assyrian religion, which never got beyond the stage of belief in spirits and in magic, could not but promote polydemonism, and the Egyptians furnished great quantities of scarabs as amulets. Moreover, the fertile lowlands proved to be inhabited by mighty spirits in far greater numbers than the barren uplands, where the nomads dwelt in tents. By the side of fountains, rivulets, and lakes; in the fruitful field, where all manner of things grew luxuriantly, where evergreen trees were to be found, where corn, and wine, and oil were to be obtained, where the herds of cattle, of sheep, and of goats increased, there mighty spirits were the lords of the land; they were the Ba'als of all these localities; nor was the abode of such spirits supposed to be confined to the earth. The fertility of the land in Palestine was supposed to depend upon the

rain; the spirits were lords of the air as well, and lived in the stars, which were imagined from of old to have an influence upon the weather.

The belief in spirits underwent an important modification however. The spirits were no longer all of them counted as indefinite and quite indefinable beings: some acquired a rather more personal character; there arose at least a distinction of sex, and a proper name was added to the Ba'al or Ba'alat of the place; the name Astarte, which the female deity received, seems to indicate that it was Babylonian influence which contributed to bring about this development in the personification of these divine powers and to the distinction between them, for it is scarcely possible to doubt the identification of Astarte with the Babylonian goddess Ištar. Astarte must have been the object of especial veneration, for many pictures have already been found of this goddess, whereas no single image of Ba'al has been discovered in the soil of Palestine. It is

no doubt possible that this may be accounted for by the fact that Astarte was the goddess of the home and of the increase of the family, whereas the images of Ba'al were not kept in the house, and have therefore disappeared. The distinctions that were thus gradually made between these spirits caused the transition from polydemonism to polytheism to be effected very easily; we are not, therefore, surprised to find that other deities found ready access to the Canaanites, as we have already seen from the evidences of the excavations and the old names of places.[1] The demons were easily identified with the foreign gods, and were called by their name whenever similar functions were ascribed to both. The names Nergal and Amon, which occur in old documents,[2] show us that foreign influences were at work, both from the east and from the southwest, bringing new gods to Palestine.

Another innovation which the Canaanite religion experienced in course of time has

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 86. [2] *Vide supra*, p. 79.

already been mentioned—the sacrificial system came to be very largely developed. The gifts of the Deity and the fertile country were far richer than they used to be in the desert, and a lean year would be doubtless felt by the farmers, who had grown accustomed to abundance and plenty. Therefore it was necessary to be on good terms with the givers of corn and of wine and of oil. Thus the sacrifices were increased quite naturally, and at the same time the conception of sacrifice was changed; it was no longer a sacramental communion, it came to be a gift. The gods were to enjoy the first-fruits, the best of all the rich blessing, the fruits of the field and the cattle; it all belonged to them. With conceptions such as these many rites and ceremonies will have come into use, on the due performance of which depended the enjoyment of the fruits of the earth. If we bear in mind these ideas, we shall also be able to account for the sacrifice of children, especially if it were the first-born that were offered up. Moreover, as we already notice, it is not

possible to explain everything in the rites and ceremonies of a religion from one centre or to derive it from one fundamental idea, for a great deal continues to subsist from earlier stages of development which have been more or less completely left behind.

The Canaanite peasant religion was closely related to the Phœnician religion. Both present exactly the same features. There, too, the old faith, with its worship of the dead and of spirits, with its sacred trees and fountains, with its "living stones," with its Massebahs and Asherahs, continued to exist in all its vigour in spite of the fact that polytheism had entered into the country with its whole train of gods. It is especially noteworthy that many deities of the name of Astarte are to be found here, just as amongst the Canaanites, as many, in fact, as there are places where an Astarte, *i.e.* a local Ba'alat, was worshipped. Here too, then, we have the same process. The original local deity acquires the name of a foreign god, and is then identified with this god. Lastly,

the Phœnician religion likewise shows us in later times a fully-developed sacrificial system —we may mention the great sacrificial tarif at Marseilles as a proof of this. The two religions therefore occupy the same stage of development in their broad outlines, and, indeed, this is but what we should be led to expect, when we consider the close relationship and the proximity of the two peoples—the Canaanites of the interior and those of the sea coast, the Phœnicians. But the fact is worth recording, because the Phœnician monuments, which have been preserved in great numbers, clearly prove the Babylonian influence to have been very great, and we are bound to conclude, therefore, that Babylon powerfully affected the inhabitants of Palestine from very early times.[1]

Such in its main features is the picture of the religion to which the Israelites had to accommodate themselves after their entrance into the fertile country of Canaan. It is not

[1] As to the Phœnician religion, cp. R. Pietschmann, *History of the Phœnicians,* 1889, 152–237.

our object here to relate the history of the conquest of the country by the Israelites. It will be sufficient if we remind ourselves that it was only after a long period that the Israelites were able to look upon themselves as the conquerors of the Canaanites and the lords of the country (towards the end of the period of the Judges, just before the foundation of the kingdom of Israel), nor was the conquest uniformly brought about by the power of the sword; in many cases it was effected by the conclusion of treaties and by amicable understanding. The original inhabitants of the country were by no means so completely rooted out as the later historians of Israel were inclined to imagine, but gradually coalesced with the Israelites. The occupation of the country was facilitated by the political chaos which prevailed in it; nominally it still stood in all probability under the dominion of Egypt, but the Egyptian Pharaoh either did not possess the power, or, if he did, he did not use it, in order to make his possession real.

The land was cut up into a number of little principalities, one or other of which, no doubt, exercised a kind of hegemony over its nearest neighbours (thus the king of Ta'anak appears, according to a document discovered by Sellin, to have been tributary to Megiddo); at any rate, everything was in a state of flux, there was no feeling of unity amongst the individual kings; on the contrary, discord and rivalry everywhere prevailed.

The contest with the Canaanite religion naturally played an important part in the struggle for the possession of the country. The religion of Canaan was not rooted out any more than the people, but was overcome by being taken over into the conqueror's religion. It would, in fact, have been even easier to assume an attitude of absolute and uncompromising hostility towards the people than towards the religion; for even supposing the inhabitants had all disappeared, the land remained, and the deities who dispensed the gifts of the land were indissolubly con-

nected with it. It is impossible to trace the single stages of this process of the fusion of the two religions with accuracy. The important thing is the result itself, and that shows us how very much of the religion of Canaan was taken over into the religion of Israel, and what important changes and alterations the religion of Jahwe had to undergo. The two religions were probably fused together, as far as all their most important features were concerned, at about the same time as the parallel process of the intermingling of the two peoples came to an end. The religion of later centuries is, however, better known than that of the period of the early kings, as our authorities are more numerous for the eighth century; and, most important of all, the prophets enable us to become acquainted with the religion of the people. The result can be briefly summarized as follows:—The nomad religion became a peasant religion, and Jahwe, the God of Israel, the Lord of Palestine.

The most striking feature of the religious

life in Palestine is the position which the cultus, the sacrificial system, acquires all at once. In the nomad religion sacrifice occupied an entirely subordinate position; in Palestine it came to be more important than everything else, and represents the climax of the religious life. The Israelite proved his adhesion to the religion of Jahwe by the offering up of sacrifices and participation in the festivals which recurred at regular intervals. Sacred places are scattered throughout the whole country; there sacrifices are brought to Jahwe and festivals are celebrated; to the more celebrated sanctuaries pilgrims came from afar, and there is an hereditary priesthood responsible for the due fulfilment of the daily service and charged with the guardianship of the sacred tabernacle, containing a symbol or picture of the Deity. The extent of the change is best realised if we recall the oldest summary of the duties of an Israelite, which is contained in Exodus xxxiv. 14–26, and which reflects the ideas that prevailed at the time of

the double monarchy. Of these duties there is not a single one that does not refer to the cultus. It is there ordained that all the males in Israel shall appear three times in the year before Jahwe—that is to say, at the Maṣṣōt Festival, at the Feast of Weeks or Harvest Festival, and at the Vintage or Feast of Tabernacles. Furthermore, it is laid down that no one is to appear empty-handed in the holy place. The best of the first-fruits of the land is to be brought thither. It is also laid down what is to be done with the blood and the fat of the sacrifices and how kids are to be seethed. Finally, the first-born are also declared to be Jahwe's property ; the making of metal pictures of the Deity is forbidden as well as the worship of foreign gods. It is important to remember in this connection that the three chief festivals are distinctly agricultural festivals. The Maṣṣōt festival is that of the first-fruits of the harvest—that is, the commencement of the harvest by means of a solemn service, and the Feast of Weeks, which was celebrated fifty

days later, evidently forms the counterpart to it as the conclusion of the corn harvest; and so, too, the connection of the Feast of Tabernacles as the Feast of the Vintage with the cultivation of the vine in the land of Canaan is unmistakable. In order to realise the influence of the settlement in Palestine on the Israelite religion, it is scarcely necessary to remind ourselves that the conception of sacrifice had completely changed. The old idea of a sacramental communion between the sacrificer and the Deity has been thrust into the background, and has had to give way to the new one, which sees in the sacrifice a gift brought to the Deity, without which one has as little right to appear before the Deity as one would before any human potentate.

The Israelite and the Canaanite religions are therefore scarcely to be distinguished in the cultus. We can trace no difference in the rites and ceremonies. The Israelites worshipped in places which were already accounted sacred by the Canaanites, and the ceremonies,

which were everywhere connected in the closest possible manner with the holy places, were unchanged, even though the worshippers were no longer the same. Thus many things which had belonged to the sacred rites of the Canaanite places of worship were taken over in the Israelite religion. Amongst these some belonged to the common Semitic stock, and had already been known to the Israelites in the nomad days — such were the Massebahs and the Asherahs, pillars and poles; but others had made their way into the Canaanite religion from foreign sources—such were the Kedeshahs and Hierodouloi. This transference of the sacred places and ceremonies of the old religion to the new one which is established in its territory is no isolated phenomenon, it is constantly repeated. Christianity itself has taken over very much of the Greco-Roman religion, changing the temples into churches, or, at least, erecting its own sanctuaries on the old consecrated ground; and, to this day, many ceremonies in Roman Catholic countries

are merely Greco-Roman rites with a thin Christian veneer. And in the case of the Iraelites it is exceptionally easy to understand how the Canaanite culture came to be taken over. They learned agriculture from the inhabitants of the country, and naturally, at the same time, also the cultus which was so intimately connected with it. The belief in local Ba'als, the lords of the place, who were the givers of all good things, could not be conceived to be in opposition to their own religion; the belief in such deities had, indeed, been peculiar to the nomads from very ancient times, and was quite compatible with belief in Jahwe, the national God. Nothing, too, was more natural than that the inhabitants of the country should teach them how to show their reverence to the Ba'als of the land, for it was they who would know best of all what the local deities demanded.[1] This pro-

[1] Cp. the parallel case in later times, when the people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, Sepharvaim were settled in the cities of Samaria (2 Kings xvii. 24–33).

cess of the gradual infiltration of the rites and ceremonies of the Canaanite cultus was considerably accelerated when the Canaanites and Israelites began to coalesce, and no longer lived separately side by side.

But with all this similarity and, in fact, identity of the outer forms of the cultus, we must not forget the important distinction which showed itself clearly and distinctly in course of time. The cultus which the Israelites practised at the old Canaanite sanctuaries was no longer intended for the gods of the country, but for Jahwe, the God of the people. The acceptation of the foreign cultus by no means indicates the weakness, but, in fact, proves the strength of the Israelite religion. Jahwe triumphed over the local deities, the Ba'als. For many years to come, however, the belief in the Ba'als of the various places persisted in unabated force, so that the people to a certain extent divided Jahwe Himself, distinguishing the Jahwe of one sanctuary from the Jahwe of another and assigning

special functions to each. Thus Absalom, when he was in exile, made his vow to the Jahwe that was worshipped at Hebron.[1] So Jahwe in one place is called "Jahwe is my banner"[2]; in another, "Jahwe is peace"[3]; and in yet another, "the God that seeth"[4]; and thus Bethel, Gilgal, Dan, Beer-sheba had become celebrated places of pilgrimage.[5] A similar process was repeated, as we have already seen, in the case of Astarte in the Canaanite religion; she, too, had to furnish a proper name for different local deities.[6] But Jahwe's personality was in nowise diminished in consequence. On the contrary, the sphere of His activity was only increased. For the only reason why He was able to take the place of the gods of Palestine was because He had become the Lord of the land. This proves the superiority of the Israelite religion over the Canaanite, a superiority which is founded in the peculiar

[1] 2 Sam. xv. 8. [2] Ex. xvii. 15.
[3] Judges vi. 24. [4] Gen. xvi. 13.
[5] Am. iv. 4, v. 5, viii. 14; Hos. iv. 15.
[6] *Vide supra*, p. 79.

nature which distinguishes Jahwe from the gods of Canaan. It is ultimately only the belief in Jahwe as the God of the whole people and of its common interests which kept alive in Israel the feeling and the consciousness of unity, in spite of the separatist tendencies which the conquest and the peaceful settlement of Canaan called into being. The people's common goal, the acquisition of a settled habitation, was accounted to be Jahwe's will, and the wars, the most effective means of attaining to this end, were Jahwe's wars. These wars formed the climax of the religious life, even before the sacrificial feasts attained to this position, and they continued to be thus considered by the side of the latter throughout this period.

By His people's occupation of the land Jahwe proved Himself to be Lord of Canaan. The functions which in earlier times were ascribed to the local deities were therefore transferred to Jahwe. He was now the giver of the gifts of nature, He sent the rain, and

provided His worshippers with corn, wine, and oil, Canaan now became His country, His house and His property[1]; and this claim to the possession of Canaan was incorporated in the national consciousness to such an extent, that outside of Palestine the Israelites felt themselves exiles and far from Jahwe,[2] even though the recollection still subsisted, and was kept alive in poetic descriptions of the theophany, that Jahwe of old had His seat in the south, especially on Mount Sinai.

Jahwe's inner being underwent no change, however, in consequence of the extension of His sphere of influence. Jahwe remained the leader of the people in the great national concerns and their guide in all internal matters, just as He had of old called the people into being and had kept it united till it settled in Canaan. This He proved, firstly, by the constant succour He gave the people in all the wars which it had to wage in the defence

[1] Hos. ix. 3, 15; 1 Sam. xxvi. 19.
[2] Hos. ix. 3. Cp. Gen. iv. 14.

of Canaan against its neighbours on all sides, against Philistines, Ammonites and Arameans, against Moabites and Edomites. These wars were holy wars, in which Jahwe reveals Himself and Israel performs a religious action; and the victories gained by Israel were celebrated by songs, which were collected in a book entitled, *The Book of the Wars of Jahwe.*[1] No less important, however, were the operations of Jahwe in the internal concerns of the people. To Him is ascribed the creation of the organization of the State. The head of this organization, the monarch, was only conceived to be in opposition to Jahwe in later times, when kings like Manasseh opened the door wide to foreign cults. In old times, on the contrary, the monarchy was looked upon as one of the greatest blessings,[2] for the king was called the consecrated[3] and the anointed of Jahwe,[4] and beside the king there stood other worshippers of Jahwe who exercised an important influ-

[1] Num. xxi. 14.
[2] 1 Sam. ix. 27, x. 1.
[3] Gen. xlix. 26.
[4] 1 Sam. xxiv. 7, 11.

ence on the people by the words they uttered. The words of the old seers and prophets echoed throughout Israel, as in the case of Deborah,[1] or gave the people their first king, as in that of Samuel.[2] The activity of the priests was of a more constant nature; in Canaan, too, they remained faithful to the original task which Moses had given them. Besides providing for the due performance of the sacrifices, their chief office was for some time to come to give directions (Thora) in the name of Jahwe, in whose sanctuary they stood. The nature of these directions and the spirit which animated them will be best gathered from the regulation of the social circumstances, the rites and ordinances which are contained in the so-called Book of the Covenant.[3] Although this law presents by no means unique features, and similar codes are known to have existed in the East at a very much earlier date,[4] yet it contains peculiar features of its own; these

[1] Judges v. 7.
[2] 1 Sam. ix.
[3] Ex. xxi. 1–xxiii. 13.
[4] *Vide supra*, p. 11.

show us that principles of law common to the whole of the East were humanely applied in Israel, and that especially in the infliction of pains and penalties the cruel features of old times, even of the code of Hammurabi, were conspicuously absent.

The superiority of the religion of Israel is therefore not merely proved by its ultimate triumph. It depends, on the contrary, on its essential character. As compared with the Canaanite religion, that of Israel is favourably distinguished by the influence which it exercises in the social and ethical sphere; and then Jahwe was from the very first far exalted above the deities of Canaan. Even when these latter came to possess names of their own, they were still greatly affected by the characteristics of a *genius loci*, whereas Jahwe is the God of the whole people. And furthermore, while these local deities are rather of the nature of impersonal spiritual forces, bound to natural phenomena, Jahwe from the very first appears as a spiritual personality

independent of nature and far exalted above human powers. Lastly, while the gods of the Canaanites show no concern whatever with the moral conduct of their worshippers, the Israelite religion has an ethical tendency, and Jahwe possesses, even at this early period, if not a moral character yet certainly moral features. His will can be opposed not only in the sphere of the cultus, but especially in that of ethics. This must not, however, be taken to imply that Jahwe was absolutely the only God, or that He was all-powerful. He was the only God that Israel had to worship in the land, and, besides possessing the will to further His people's welfare, He possessed the power to carry out this will. As long as the belief prevailed in the existence of other gods besides Jahwe whom other peoples worshipped, and the Israelites felt themselves to be distant from Jahwe when once beyond the limits of Palestine, it was impossible to ascribe the existence of the world and the creation of the universe to the activity of the national God.

Reflections as to the origin of the cosmos were limited to a later period in the history of the religion of Israel; it was only when the prophets had recognised the greater power of Jahwe that Jahwe could become the creator of the whole world. This belief and the passages in the O.T. which thus conceive of Jahwe do not belong to the original contents of the Israelite peasant religion, but were only added to it in the days of the prophets.

As the power of Jahwe was thus by no means absolute, a great deal of the old faith in divine '*numina*' continued to subsist in the Israelite peasant religion, and many similar beliefs were taken over from the Canaanites. In this connection we may mention once more the building sacrifice,[1] the sacrifices to the dead and the inquiry of the dead,[2] as well as the conception of Sheol, the subterranean realm of the dead, in which they lead a kind of phantom life which stands in no relation whatever to Jahwe; furthermore, many prac-

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 80. [2] Cp. 1 Sam. xxviii.

tices still continued in daily life which came in later times either to be absolutely prohibited as superstitious or to be rendered innocuous through interpretation, but which were not as yet conceived to be in contradiction to Jahwe, the God of the people and the Lord of the land. Thus it is demons to whose influence diseases, especially leprosy, are ascribed, and demonic activity is presupposed in the mystery of birth as well as in sexual intercourse generally. Hence the uncleanness which was supposed to attach to women after childbirth, and also the sacrifice of children, especially of the first-born, a practice which was not only current amongst the Canaanites,[1] but only gradually became obsolete amongst the Israelites themselves. While these beliefs are all common to peasants and nomads, the following customs, amongst others, are closely connected with the peasant life:—The products of newly-planted fruit trees and vineyards were not allowed to

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 80.

be used during the first years; this applied, in fact, to the first-fruits of the land as a whole.[1] These belonged to the spirits of the field. So too, in later times, the outermost border of the field that was being reaped was left for them, and a sheaf of corn was there forgotten. The later law sanctioned the custom, but turned the offerings due to the spirits of the field into gifts to the poor.[2]

Just as Jahwe's power was limited in extent, so, too, His will was as yet not fully known, and His ordinances were not clearly laid down for all the varying circumstances of life. Sin was the opposite of what was customary in Israel; it was what one ought "no-where and never to do." The sinner committed "an unheard-of folly."[3] But even he that was on his guard against deeds such as these was still liable to fall under the wrath of Jahwe. This alone showed that any deed had been done

[1] Lev. xix. 23–25. [2] Lev. xix. 9; Deut. xxiv. 19.
[3] Gen. xx. 9, xxxiv. 7; 2 Sam. xiii. 12 *seq.*

in opposition to the divine will.[1] This uncertainty as to Jahwe's secret will, and the conciousness that His displeasure could easily be aroused, even unintentionally, contributed largely, however, to the fear of God becoming the characteristic of the true Israelite, a characteristic which, it was imagined, one could not presuppose in the case of a foreigner.[2]

It is the stories of the patriarchs contained in the book of Genesis which best enable us to judge of the religious feelings which prevailed among the Israelite peasants in Palestine and of the influence which religion exercised upon their life as a whole. For though older elements are contained in these stories, the shape in which they are presented to us in the O.T., both in the Jahwistic and the Elohistic versions, dates from the time when Israel was settled in the land of Palestine, and the life which they reflect is not that of a few legendary figures who are said to have sojourned in

[1] Cp. Ex. iv. 24 *seq.* [2] Gen. xx. 11, xxii. 12.

Palestine as strangers before the existence of the people of Israel, but the life of the Israelite peasants, while some features in the picture may be already due to the influence of the teaching of the prophets; so that Jahwe does not appear to be strictly confined within the limits of Palestine. It is, on the whole, that of the Israelitic peasant religion as it existed before the prophets of the eighth century. And, above all, the patriarchs appear as the examples of piety and righteousness for all true Israelites.

This is not the place to inquire as to the separate elements which compose these stories about the patriarchs nor how they gradually coalesced. The question of their origin and growth does not here concern us. It is a matter of indifference to us whether Egyptian elements are to be found in the story of Joseph[1] or elsewhere; what we are here concerned with is the finished form which the Jahwist and Elohist present us in the O.T.

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 22.

Nor is our task here to estimate the literary value of these stories. The striking features which they present in this respect have rightly been emphasised of late, but it is scarcely necessary to call our attention to them, for everyone who reads these narratives in their original form, after later additions have been excised, will be sure to feel their wonderful charm and the many delicacies of expression. We may take as an instance the way in which the sacrifice of Isaac[1] becomes one of the most thrilling of stories by the employment of the simplest means; or, again, we may remind ourselves of the narrative skill exhibited in the excellent description of the varied situations in the story of Joseph, and in the way in which the single events are grouped under one leading thought[2]; or we may think of the joy which the teller of the tale and his hearers alike experience when we are told how Jacob proves a match for all Laban's wiles and the Aramean everywhere

[1] Gen. xxii. 1–19. [2] Gen. xxxvii. 39–50.

comes off the worse in his encounters with the Israelite.[1]

We are here concerned with the religious value of these stories in the form which they eventually assumed in the Jahwist and Elohist narrators. In general terms we may say that the religious disposition which is here described is one of joyful confidence and lofty hope. Jahwe appears as the mighty protector of His people. He knows how to rescue His worshippers in critical situations.[2] Above all, He helps the Israelites to victory in contest with the foreigners (cp. Joseph in Egypt, Jacob and Laban — Jacob-Israel and Esau-Edom). Even if dark days came, days when it was difficult to understand why Jahwe was angry, they took comfort in the thought that Jahwe could never refuse His protection and His help entirely and for ever. This faith received its most beautiful expression in the story of Joseph.[3] Joseph was not forgotten, and his

[1] Gen. xxx. 29–xxxi. 54.

[2] Gen. xii. 10–20, xx. 1–17, xxvi. 1–14. [3] Gen. l. 19 *seq.*

fortunes in the end bring about the salvation of the whole family of Jacob. Full of confidence, the people go forward into the unknown future. After all, Jahwe is never really opposed to the Israelites: the great day of Jahwe is bound to come. Then there will be a striking manifestation of His help, and He will save His people, Israel. The thought that Israel could possibly perish is never entertained. Whoever harboured such doubts would but prove his want of faith in Jahwe, for Jahwe and His people, Israel, belong indissolubly together. In spite of the prophets, this belief persisted in the people of Israel till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the hope in the future which was thereby fostered more than counterbalanced Jahwe's dark and mysterious ways in the present, which were often hard to accept, because the wrath of Jahwe was incomprehensible.

All that the stories in Genesis tell us of the God-fearing spirit and upright conduct in the daily affairs of life is of no less importance. On the one hand, the patriarchs do not neglect

the duty of public worship. Their delight was to sacrifice at the holy places. Indeed, according to these stories it was their worship which first consecrated the places at which the people sacrificed. And, on the other, the patriarch's conduct testified to their fear of God. Many a fine trait in their character points to this. In order to ensure peace, Abraham foregoes his rights in favour of the younger Lot[1] and exercises lavish hospitality in a typical manner.[2] Abraham and Joseph both distinguish themselves by resignation to God's will. The latter resists the temptation of the adulterous woman, because he will not commit so grievous a wrong and sin against God[3]; he forgives his brethren, and requites the evil they have done him with good.[4] Besides these beautiful features, much that is evil is told us of the same persons in the most matter-of-fact way, without a word of criticism and even with evident pleasure, and this certainly proves the ethical

[1] Gen. xiii.
[2] Gen. xviii.
[3] Gen. xxxix. 9.
[4] Gen. l. 15–31.

influence exercised by religion at that time to have been very superficial and far from serious. That a man should continue to gain advantage for himself by prevarication and lies, by craft and deceit, was evidently not conceived to be incompatible with faith in Jahwe. Jacob is a typical example of this: not only does he overreach Laban, but he deceives his father and tricks his brother out of his rights without incurring any blame. The surrender of Sarah to a foreign prince [1] and the institution of the Kedeshahs [2] prove the existence of lax views as to the sexual relations. The development of the forces that made for righteousness was hindered by the cultus.

These few examples will be sufficient to show how the character of the Israelite peasant religion is reflected in the stories in the book of Genesis. It is distinguished on the one hand from the old nomad religion principally by the incorporation of the Canaanite sacrificial

[1] Gen. xii. 10–20.

[2] Gen. xxxviii. 21 *seq.* Cp. Deut. xxiii. 18.

cultus, and by the extension of Jahwe's sphere of influence to the possession of the land of Canaan; and, on the other hand, there is a clear line of demarcation between the religion of Israel at this stage of its development and the Canaanite peasant religion. Israel possesses a different conception of God: Jahwe has nothing in common with the local deities. He is the God of the whole people and the whole country, and His influence extends likewise to the development of justice and morality among His people.

CHAPTER III

The Religion of the Prophets

The religion of the prophets did not arise, as did the peasant religion, through a compromise or syncretism with a foreign religion. During the period of the activity of the prophets with whom we are here concerned—Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and then Deutero-Isaiah—the religions of Assyria, Babylon and Persia did, it is true, begin to loom upon the horizon of the Israelites. The impulse to the new understanding of Jahwe did not, however, come from without, for the first of these prophets, who already belong entirely to the new order, had certainly seen but little of Assyria and its religion, and the latter, who had probably come into direct

contact with the great empires of the East, and may have become better acquainted with their religions, do not reveal the slightest trace of foreign influence that can be positively identified.

It is scarcely necessary to take serious notice of the hypothesis, that the prophets of the eighth century were the diplomatic emissaries of the Assyrian power in Palestine. There is not much of the diplomatist about any of these men: it is not easy to understand how a shepherd of Tekoa, Amos, could have been fitted for a diplomatic mission to the northern kingdom in the interest of Assyria. Nor is the mere fact that the Assyrian empire now appears with new power on the horizon of the world's history, and extends itself irresistibly westwards, an adequate explanation for the appearance of such prophetic men. There were many others at that time in Palestine, and especially in the royal castle at Jerusalem, who observed the advance of the Assyrian power, but yet they did not become prophets,

nor did they adhere to the teaching of the prophets. It is not to be denied that the new imperial power loomed large in the prophets' outlook, but it was the new teaching of the prophets that came first and that led men to understand the Assyrians and the work they were destined to accomplish.

The religion of the prophets is rather to be considered as an inner evolution of the Israelite religion itself. The different elements in this religion are realised in their opposition to each other; and some are thrust into the background, others are allowed to develop freely. The prophets take up a position of uncompromising hostility to all that is heathen in the Israelite religion of their days, especially to the ritual borrowed from the Canaanites, but they single out the ethical tendency; it appeals to them. They clear away misunderstandings and further its development. We shall see later how it was that the prophets came to take up this standpoint.

The prophets of the eighth century were

not absolutely the first. But, however important Elijah and Elisha may have been, and they must have been important personages, if we judge by the fact that a whole mass of stories has gathered itself round their names, we cannot gain as clear a knowledge of their teaching as in the case of their successors, whose words have come down to us in writings of their own. All that we can recognise with certainty is that they were the predecessors of the later prophets in so far as they stirred up a reaction against heathenism, and that they did so starting from similar principles. But, as far as we can see, their opposition was only directed against the new heathen current that was endeavouring to force its way in from without, against the worship of the Tyrian Baal and Astarte, not against the heathen leaven which had already been admitted into the Israelite religion. If we wish to study the peculiar nature of the prophets' religion, we may therefore count Amos of Tekoa as the first

in the succession of prophets, and the second Isaiah the last of these great men of the O.T.; for those that came later, even though they were called prophets, are but Epigoni, and the religion of the prophets was already mingled with foreign elements. We may consider this tendency to have originated in Ezechiel; though he lived before the second Isaiah, he is not to be reckoned among the real prophets.

Looking at the prophets' religion as a whole, the most striking characteristic is undoubtedly monotheism, the belief that Jahwe, the God of Israel, is the one and only God. Before the prophets began to teach, Jahwe was considered in the religion of Israel as Israel's God alone, mightier, it is true, than the gods of the neighbouring tribes whom He had vanquished in battle, mightier than the Baals of the Canaanites, mightier than Milcom, god of the Ammonites, and Chemosh, god of the Moabites, and the people's confidence was firmly rooted that His power would continue

undiminished in all future time to protect His people, and uphold it against all foreign gods and their worshippers. But, since the prophets appeared and began to teach, the confession of the Israelite faith has ever been, "Jahwe, our God, is one God,"[1] and this confession of monotheism can be traced as a red thread from the prophets downwards throughout the religion of the Israelites. The belief in one God was the pride of Israel in the later centuries. Hence their consciousness of superiority over the heathen religions with their polytheism; nor was monotheism the least powerful influence, which attracted so many heathen in the Greco-Roman world, with its worship of many gods, and induced them to become proselytes and accept the Jewish religion.

The question has been raised whether we have any right to speak of monotheism in connection with the earliest of our series of prophets, Amos, or whether it is not rather

[1] Deut. vi. 4.

in the last in Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah that this doctrine first appears. Both views are right; they merely emphasize different sides of the question. The first lays greater stress on the power of this belief in the one God, the other on the fully conscious expression which this belief received. In religion, however, it is not formulæ that are vital, but the living power, and this can really be present before its significance has been expressed in words. When the latent power is manifested, then the corresponding expression is found of its own accord in due course. Such was the case with monotheism. It was a gradual growth; only by slow degrees did the prophets realize how their conception of Jahwe had distinctly outstripped the form of monolatry and included the acknowledgment of only one God. But this monotheism existed as early as Amos, because in all practical cases Jahwe alone exists for him, and beside Him the gods of the heathen are utter nothingness. The power latent in the prophets' belief from the very

first could not be greater even if the earliest amongst them had expressly called Jahwe the one God. According to Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, Jahwe has not only power over Israel and its armies, but the Assyrians and Egyptians are at His disposal to carry out His plans; He need but whistle for them and they will hasten to Him as though they were flies or bees[1]; He can bid the fire approach[2] and can also send it into the principal cities of the neighbouring dominions.[3] His sway is unlimited; neither in heaven above nor in the earth beneath, nor in the world that is under the earth, is it possible to escape His arm[4]; His glory fills the whole earth,[5] and His power is of a higher kind than that of the nations, even if they are not conceived as described by their gods. Jahwe represents the spiritual principle, compared with which all other powers are but flesh; He, who is God, needs but "stretch out His hand" and

[1] Isaiah vii. 18 *seq.* [2] Amos vii. 4.
[3] Amos i. 4, 14, ii. 2. [4] Amos ix. 2–4. [5] Isa. vi. 3.

the carnal cavalry stumbles and falls.[1] One might transcribe every page of the prophets of the eighth century; they contain a unanimous testimony to the sole, unlimited, and irresistible power of Jahwe, and afford at the same time the proof that in its essence monotheism existed from the very first in the earliest prophets. Compared with this it is a fact of no importance that, as far as we know, it is only when we come to the book of Deuteronomy that the monotheistic faith finds its formula, and that the detailed descriptions of the transcendent, unique, and incomparable nature of Jahwe are not to be found before the time of Deutero-Isaiah.

The word monotheism is not, however, in itself sufficient to characterize the religion of the prophets; for if it depends on the word alone, the prophetic religion of Israel could not maintain its claim to have been the first to conceive this idea and to have represented monotheism in the world.

[1] Isa. xxxi. 3.

A short time ago it used to be confidently asserted that the knowledge of the unity of God had been reached by a few choice minds in Assyria and Babylonia long before the time of the prophets of Israel. By these enlightened men the various gods of the pantheon, with their difficult names, were, it was maintained, merely conceived as the emanations of the one deity. This hypothesis, it is true, has had to be abandoned. The former confident assertion has given way to the timid suggestions that there may possibly be secret monotheistic tendencies within the Babylonian religion, which might be discovered in the occult Babylonian star-worship, or that there was a "highest God," supreme above all gods, or that the Babylonian polytheism was "monarchical"; but all this is an entirely different thing to a real belief in one God. We have nothing to warrant the existence of a genuine monotheistic tendency in the East, outside of Israel, before the sixth century B.C., and there can be no doubt that the belief in one God

had been firmly established in Israel a long time before that.[1]

There is one exception, however—the Egyptian monotheism. It certainly existed, though its life was but of short duration. It is well known that about the year 1400 B.C. the Pharaoh Amenhotep (Amenophis) IV.—our knowledge concerning him has recently been augmented by the discoveries at El Amarna,[2]—inaugurated a religious reformation. In place of all the gods of the Egyptian pantheon, he determined that the sun-god alone should be worshipped as the sole ruler of heaven and earth; instead of the many phantom forms and empty names he wanted to set the one true God, the source of all life and growth in things created. The reformer-king was thoroughly in earnest, the pictures and names of the gods that stood in no relation to the sun were destroyed and abolished, and only

[1] Cp. A. Jeremias, *Monotheistische Strömungen innerhalb der babylonischen Religion*, 1904.

[2] *Vide supra*, p. 73.

that which had something to do with the sun found favour in his sight. That is why he changed even his own name, which was derived from that of the hated and proscribed god Amon, and called himself Chuen-aten (reflection of the sun's orb), in accordance with the new monotheistic belief. The Egyptian religious reformation was effected by means of force; but after the death of the reformer, Chuen-aten, his work became extinct and the old polytheism reasserted itself once more.

The rapid decay of the Egyptian reformation compared with the victorious persistence of the prophetic religion proves clearly that we must distinguish between different kinds of monotheism. Far more depends upon the inner power of the faith in God than on the mere word *one* God. What, then, is it that distinguishes one monotheism from another? That we shall see if we inquire into the origin of each faith.

Chuen-aten's monotheism arose in Egypt from the need that was felt to assimilate all

secondary deities. Its source was purely intellectual. Men observed and compared the powers of nature. They reflected upon the results of their observation, and finally taught that all these powers were but manifestations of one primary cause, the symbol of which was the sun. This belief in one God, or it would be better to express the matter abstractedly, in one deity, is therefore essentially the result of abstraction, of pantheistic speculation: it may be termed a philosophical monotheism. Bearing this, its origin, in mind, it is not difficult to account for the ephemeral success of Egyptian monotheism. It possessed no inner power of its own, and that is why he who did not feel the need for such speculation, and was unaffected by the logical sequence of ideas, refused to accept the conclusion. The great mass of the people fell back into polytheism.

The origin of the prophets' belief in one God, and therefore, too, of their conception of the being of this God, is entirely different.

The source of the prophetic monotheism was

not the observation of nature and its powers, nor reflection upon the phenomena of this world of nature. It was only gradually that the prophets came to teach that the whole of nature was embraced in God's sphere of action. It was, in fact, only the latest, Deutero-Isaiah, who devoted greater attention to this observation of nature. Incidentally the earlier prophets mention that Jahwe bestows rain and fruitful seasons, and that from Him come drought and famine[1]; but that does not in reality take us beyond the stage of the peasant religion. It is quite possible, too, that soon after the appearance of the first prophets, when Assyrio-Babylonian creation stories became current, Jahwe was called Creator of the World in Israel.[2] Previous to the exile, however, this representation does not appreciably influence religion. Jahwe's solitary and absolute power had already been recognised and established from another point of view before reference was made to nature and its wonders in order

[1] Amos iv. 7 *seq.*, vii. 4; Hos. ii. 11. [2] Gen. ii. 4 *seq.*

to illustrate His omnipotence, and before new proofs were found in the creation and preservation of the world for the greatness and sublimity of the one God. The mere fact that the passages relating to the creation of the world and the magnificence of nature are wanting at the beginning of the prophetic era, appear at first sporadically, and only in Deutero-Isaiah[1] in any quantity, clearly proves that it was not the observation of nature which led to monotheism in Israel.

Nor, again, is the belief in the one God to be derived from the principle of exclusiveness, as some have maintained of late. This national exclusiveness is, in its turn, supposed to have been caused by the gradual diminution of the Jewish kingdom to so small a territory that there was no longer any room for any other gods. Their right to receive worship was first of all contested, and then their existence was denied. But this explanation is manifestly at fault. In the first place belief in the one God

[1] Isa. xl. 14–16, 21–26, xlii. 5, xliv. 24, xlv. 12–18, xlviii. 13.

was, as a matter of fact, already in existence among the prophets before the territory of Israel and of Judah had been appreciably diminished; and, again, it may be observed that none of Israel's neighbours, though exposed to essentially the same historical conditions and though each had its principal deity, ever attained to monotheism. Lastly, there can be no manner of doubt that the prophets in nowise felt the shrinkage of the territory to be a diminution of Jahwe's power that needed any kind of compensation. On the contrary, the prophets saw, in the circumstances which led to the destruction of the kingdoms of Judah and of Israel, the very proof which they needed of the omnipotence of that God whose messengers they were and whom they conceived as alone existing. The utmost that can be admitted is that the monolatry already existing in Israel, the belief that Israel had to worship Jahwe alone, afforded a favourable soil for the rise of monotheism, but it in nowise accounts for that rise. The national gods of other peoples perished

with them, because they had no prophets such as those of Israel.

The prophets' belief in one God is not founded ultimately upon experience of His omnipotence in the world without, but upon experience of His illimitable power and His sole authority in the sphere of the world within. God is revealed to them in the depths of their heart, and they become conscious of Him as the decisive power whose sphere of activity knows no bounds, and is especially not limited by the boundaries of the land and people of Israel. God is felt by them as the representative, as the principle of all that is good and moral; He has an absolute worth, and exercises a mighty influence on all that experience His true being; at the same time He is the power which would have the good performed unconditionally. The ethical element which clung to the religion of Jahwe from its very first start, and was only forced into the background by intermixture with the cultus in the peasant religion, forces its way through with the prophets; the

priority in religion is accorded to it rather than to sacrifices and ceremonies, and its undisputed sway and unchecked development are looked upon as the only true signs of a genuine religious temperament.

If we regard its origin, the monotheism of the prophets is no product of reflection, but an experience of the heart; it is no hypothesis, but the result of empirical observation; it is not philosophical but ethical monotheism. That is why the nature, power, and claims of this one God are entirely different to those of other gods.

We can prove, in the clearest possible manner, from the prophets' own words, that their belief in the one God arose from an inner experience. They feel God's power as an inner compulsion which cannot possibly be resisted. A psychical constraining force, conceived as a call from God, impels the prophet Amos to leave his herd and go to Bethel as God's messenger. The Israelites are there assembled for the glad harvest

festival, and the prophet announces to them the destruction of the kingdom.[1] Amos himself explains the irresistible and constraining force of this inner compulsion by producing parallels which contain just as necessary a connection of cause and effect, so that we can conclude from the one to the other, and they show us that the prophet acts with the certainty of an involuntary reflex motion when God touches his spirit.[2]

"Will a lion roar in the forest
Unless the prey be there for him?
Will a young lion cry out of his den
Unless he have taken something?

Does a bird fall to the ground
Unless a weapon have struck it?
Shall a snare spring up from the ground
Unless it really have taken something?

Or shall the trumpet be blown in a city
And the people not be afraid?
Or shall a misfortune happen in a city
And Jahwe hath not done it?

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[1] Amos vii. 14 *seq.* [2] Amos iii. 4–6, 8.

The lion roars
Who is not afraid;
The Lord Jahwe speaks
Who can but prophesy."

Isaiah feels himself seized by God's hand with irresistible might,[1] so that he now judges the position of the land quite differently to his contemporaries. As he stood in the temple lost in adoration, and saw Jahwe sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, then the greatness and the sublimity of Jahwe were revealed to him, and God became known to him as representing the spiritual and moral principle, as the Lord of the whole world.

"Holy, holy, holy, is Jahwe of hosts,
The whole earth is full of the glory."

But at the same time he is constrained to enter into the service of this Lord, and to declare the divine judgment to his fellow-citizens.[2]

In succinct and telling words Micah indicates the source of his strength and power which

[1] Isa. viii. 11. [2] Isa. vi.

embolden him to stand forth as prophet, and to cry out in the face of his adversaries inspired by the gifts they have received[1]:

"But I am full of power,
And full of judgment and of might,
To declare unto Jacob his transgression,
And to Israel his sin."

Jeremiah's testimony, however, to the all-compelling power exercised upon him by the knowledge of the truth that Jahwe has revealed to him is at once the profoundest and clearest. He can no longer take counsel with flesh and blood. He *must* declare the demands of Jahwe in spite of all persecutions and all dangers.[2]

"Thou didst entice me, I let myself be enticed;
Thou didst seize me, didst conquer;
I am become a laughing-stock all the day,
Every one mocketh me.

If I speak, I cannot but exclaim:
Iniquity! Violence!
All the day my words bring down upon me
Mockery and scorn.

[1] Micah iii. 8. [2] Jer. xx. 7–10. Duhm's translation.

Yet when I thought I will cease
I will speak no more;
Then it was as a glowing fire,
As a burning in my bones.

I can no longer hold out,
I cannot endure it;
For I heard many hissing—
Terror on every side:—

Let us denounce him, we his
Familiar friends! Watch but
For him, perhaps he will make a mistake,
And we shall prevail against him."

His lament that all that he does is in vain[1] is very impressive, and so, too, is Jahwe's answer,[2] which constrains him in spite of all to stand firm against his adversaries.[3]

"Never sat I rejoicing in the glad
Assembly:—solitary
Because of thy oppression sat I,
Full of thy indignation.

Why was my pain perpetual,
My hurt incurable?
Thou wast unto me as a deceitful brook
Upon which there is no relying.

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[1] Jer. xv. 17 *seq.* [2] Jer. xv. 19–21.
[3] Jer. xv. 17–21. Duhm's translation.

Turn and I will grant unto thee a returning
That thou mayest stand before me.
Speak that which is noble without blame
And thou shalt be my mouth.

I will make thee unto this people
A fenced wall,
They shall storm against thee
But they shall not prevail.

I am with thee, thy saviour
And thy deliverer,
I will loose thee out of the hands
Of the wicked and of the violent."

We realize the nature of this power which seized hold of the prophets as we study the contents of their teaching, and especially the claims which they made. Here we have once more the clearest proof of the complete difference between the monotheism of Chuen-aten and that of the prophets. All that Chuen-aten attempted was ceremonial reform ; the prophets make ethical claims in the name and in the commission of their God. All that Chuen-aten obtains is the increased power of his one deity, which he sets up in the place of the others. It remains a more or less physical

power. The God whom the prophets serve is a power of a completely different nature, a spiritual personality of an entirely ethical character. The absolute, which the one God represents, is realised and displays itself above all in the sphere of ethics. The very first of the prophets mastered this new conception with unmistakable certainty, and he emphasized the characteristic peculiarity of the prophetic religion when he places side by side as equivalent variants of his fundamental claim:

"Seek the good and ye shall live,"

and

"Seek Jahwe and ye shall live."[1]

Henceforward the closest union between religion and ethics is of the very essence of the prophetic religion. True religion inevitably leads to ethics. The only proof that a truly religious man can give of his religion is a consistent moral life, and so, too, that alone is true morality which is founded in religion, and thence derives its

[1] Amos v. 4, 6, 14.

strength. Religion and ethics form a whole, religion being the roots and supplying the dynamic, and ethics the fruit and displaying the effects.

The position which the prophets occupy towards the cultus and the law proves that this intimate connection between religion and ethics—we may even say, in a certain sense, their identification—really forms the prophetic teaching, and corresponds to their thoughts about religion.

Not one of the prophets ever demanded the offering up of sacrifices as the sign of a pious and religious life. On the contrary, they were always the outspoken opponents of the sacrificial cultus practised by their contemporaries. In almost every one you can read the flat rejection of the cultus. The words of Amos are plain enough:

"I hate, yes I despise your feasts,
And I will not smell at your festivals;
And your sacrificial gifts I do not want,
And the sacrificial meal of your calves I will not regard.

Away from me with the noise of your songs,
And the playing of your harps I will not hear.
Let judgment roll down as waters
And righteousness as a stream that will never run dry." [1]

To what an extent the practices of the people at the holy places, where were offered the sacrifices, appeared to the prophet to be in contradiction with Jahwe, he shows by speaking of this cultus as nothing less than sin and transgression:

"Come to Bethel and transgress,
To Gilgal and transgress yet more;
And bring on the morrow your sacrifices
And on the third day your tithes." [2]

Hosea's verdict upon the Israelites, who perform their religious duties with sacrifices instead of with love, is identical [3]:

"What more can I do unto thee, O Ephraim?
What more can I do unto thee, O Israel?
For thy love is as a morning cloud,
And as the dew that vanisheth early.

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[1] Amos v. 21–24. [2] Amos iv. 4. [3] Hosea vi. 4–6.

Therefore have I hewed thee by prophets,
I have slain thee by the words of my mouth.
For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
And the knowledge of God, not burnt-offerings."

Isaiah passes the same condemnation on the cultus at Jerusalem:

"Hear the word of Jahwe,	ye rulers of Sodom;
Give ear unto the teaching of our God,	ye men of Gomorrha;
What shall I do unto the multitude of your sacrifices?	saith Jahwe.
I am tired of the burnt-offering of rams	and the fat of calves;
In the blood of bullocks and of he-goats	I have no delight.
When ye come to see my face,	who hath required this;
To trample my courts,	from that ye shall desist.
To bring oblations,	it is an abomination to me.
New moon and Sabbath	I cannot endure.
Fasts and feasts	are hateful to my soul.
And if ye spread forth your hands,	I will hide mine eyes from you.
And if ye make ever so many prayers,	I will yet not hear.
Your hands are full of blood;	wash you, make you clean.

Put away the evil of your doings — from before mine eyes.
Hasten after that which is right, — oppose the transgressor,
Give judgment for the fatherless, — plead for the widow." [1]

Jeremiah, too, rejects the cultus with unmistakable directness when he calls to the multitude as they stream into the temple: "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, 'The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these.'" [2] All sacrifice is in vain:

"Wherefore is there for me incense
That cometh from Saba;
The sweet cane from the far country—
They are not sweet to me." [3]

It is a certain fact for the prophets that Jahwe's sacred places, even the temple at Jerusalem, might be destroyed and yet religion would continue unharmed.[4] Where religion is cultus and nothing else, it is valueless.

[1] Isa. i. 10–17.
[2] Jer. vii. 4.
[3] Jer. vi. 20. Duhm's translation.
[4] *E.g.* Micah iii. 12.

This repudiation of the cultus was no mere passionate outburst on the part of the prophets: they saw the illusion, the false sense of security with which the cultus lulled the multitude to sleep, as though communion with God were thereby restored and attained; they were bound, therefore, to recognise in the cultus the chief hindrance and stumbling-block to the right fellowship with God. The proof of being at one with God is something far different to attendance at the noisy feasts and all that was connected with them: it is to do good, as Amos expresses it. But of this "doing good" the prophets had a very deep conception—it was no mere external good work. To realise this we need but look at the way in which the inner power is described on which the doing of good depends. According to Hosea there is no true knowledge of God if there is a lack of good deeds,[1] and by knowledge of God he does not mean anything merely intellectual, but the fine feeling and perception of the divine being

[1] Hos. iv. 1, 6, v. 4, vi. 6.

and the divine strength in the depths of the soul, which of itself leads men to hope in God, and urges them to active love and faith, to justice and righteousness. What Hosea calls "hope in God" Isaiah terms faith, and sometimes "quietness" and "confidence." Just as Amos unites Jahwe and life, so Isaiah places faith and abiding together—here "abiding" has the same deep meaning as life—when he says: "If ye have no faith, there is no staith for you";[1] or, "He that believeth shall not give way."[2] Just as in Hosea hope in God is the condition of salvation, so with Isaiah it is confidence.

"For thus spake the Lord Jahwe, the Holy One of Israel,
In returning and rest lies your salvation.
In quietness and in confidence consists your strength;
But ye would not, and ye said No!"[3]

"Faith," too, then has nothing purely intellectual about it: like Hosea's knowledge of God, it is man's response to his perception of

[1] Isa. vii. 9. [2] Isa. xxviii. 16. [3] Isa. xxx. 15.

the divine strength by the inner sense. The knowledge of God and faith are therefore no human achievements, but effects of the divine strength, and, therefore, we have a proof of union with God wherever pure moral action proceeds from them and the fellowship with God is a reality and not illusion, as in the cultus.

The fact that the prophets have a very clear perception of the difference between mere legalism and true morality shows us that this inner connection of "doing good" with Jahwe is their chief concern. What is the use, says Hosea, of giving Israel so many precepts? They have no understanding for them, they will only regard them as uncalled-for demands made upon them by a foreigner[1]; and Isaiah calls the people's fear of God a commandment of men learnt by rote[2] because they approach Jahwe with their mouth only and honour him only with their lips, but their heart is far from Him. This distinction, however, has been

[1] Hos. viii. 12. [2] Isa. xxix. 13.

most clearly realised by the deepest of all the prophets, Jeremiah. He looked upon it as a danger that the demands of God should be collected in a book of the law. As a result he expected that mere legalism would take the place of true moral conduct. And he saw how this, his foreboding, was realised; how men were self-deceived, thinking themselves wise through possession of the Thora, while in reality they despised Jahwe's word.[1] He knew that where true religion is, there is a force which leads men always and everywhere to the practice of justice and righteousness, of love and pity, far better, far more powerfully and thoroughly than mere knowledge of the law, which in the best of cases only does what the law demands, but is not able to meet all the changes and chances of this life, nor is it prepared for all the individual instances which present themselves. The living, immediate connection between religion and morality, between God and man, is not

[1] Jer. viii. 8 *seq.*

to be interrupted by the interposition of a law, and when there is no fellowship with God then "the foreskin of the heart must be circumcised," *i.e.* whatever hinders man's receptivity must be removed, and there must be a thorough reformation, a "breaking up of the fallow ground," otherwise it is but "a sowing among thorns,"[1] it is a light superficial healing of an inner breach.[2] Jahwe must Himself be enthroned in power in every heart without any intermediary; then religion will be a constant and mighty impulse to morality, and will fashion the character of the religious man so that it be moral. For the prophets, therefore, religion is not only meaningless, it is not genuine religion at all unless it exercises a moral power in life; and, on the other hand, morality is imperfect and weak and half-developed when it lacks the motive power of religion. Religion is an illusion when it develops no power for the guidance of life, and morality an empty show where it is not

[1] Jer. iv. 3 *seq.* [2] Jer. vi. 14.

rooted in the innermost heart of man, in religion.

The proof of the correctness of this intimate, inner connection between religion and morality, as characteristic of the prophetic teaching, is to be found, firstly, in the fact that there is no trace of legalism in the prophets' demands—the prophets never consented to be lawgivers. Later, it is true, men attempted, as we shall see, to formulate a law which should prove adequate to the demands made by the prophets. The way in which the project was carried out shows, however, how little these well-meaning men had grasped the true significance of the prophetic religion, for they included ceremonial regulations in their laws, and even assigned a considerable place to them. And, on the other hand, the thought of a reward apart from the fulfilling of the divine will is altogether foreign to the prophets. The motive for action is never the thought of reward, but an inner compulsion. The impulse

does not come from the world without, but ultimately from God. The true knowledge of God—that is Hosea's name for religion—embraces the knowledge of what Jahwe is and wills, and, above all, of what He has done and yet does, and so it produces a feeling of gratitude for His gifts. That is why the prophets so often point out how Jahwe cares for His people like a father, how He has nurtured them and given them strength, or granted them deliverance from Egypt and their enemies. When Jahwe is acknowledged, and religion a direct power, there is no room for the thought of reward, but only for thanksgiving for God's goodness.

It will be evident from the foregoing observations that the true character of the prophetic religion will be best represented by calling it a pure ethical monotheism. And, in so doing, the emphasis must be laid on the qualifying adjective. This religion is not merely a monotheism, it is a purely ethical monotheism. The importance thus attached

to the ethical side of religion also distinctly distinguishes the prophetic religion from the pantheistic monotheism of Chuen-aten. Jahwe is not only an abstract omnipotence, He is an almighty spiritual personality who wills the good and represents the good; He is therefore, if the expression may be applied to God, a personality with an outspoken ethical character.

Having thus determined the essential characteristics of the prophetic religion, that which differentiates it from the peasant religion will strike us without the need of further investigation. The peasant religion was tolerant of other deities, even if it reserved Jahwe for the people of Israel alone. Other peoples could honour their own gods and Israel did not deny their existence, and even the belief in "demons" and deities for the smaller events of daily life was by no means in opposition to the belief in Jahwe, the God of the people and of the country. Hence the Israelites were perpetually exposed to the temptation

of worshipping other gods at the same time as Jahwe, especially when political alliances sanctioned the power of foreign nations and their gods. The entrance of Assyrian deities into Jerusalem, and even into the temple, is easily intelligible at a time when Juda was a vassal state of the Assyrian empire, as in the seventh century, under Manasse and his successors. The peculiar political circumstances of the last decades of the Jewish kingdom account for the presence of Egyptian cults in addition.

One cannot, however, call the prophetic religion exactly intolerant; it is intolerant of sin and the cultus. Its opposition first and foremost to all that hinders true religion, corresponds with its ethical nature. The teaching of the prophets deals, therefore, with unrighteousness and uncharitableness, with lying and trickery in everyday life, with all the social evils that afflict the people, with the delusions produced by the feasts and sacrificial systems, and with insistence on the true

nature of Jahwe, on His holiness and omnipotence. But we should look in vain in the prophetic writings for learned discussions intended to enlighten the people as to the non-existence of the other gods. It is noticeable that, generally speaking, what is called fanaticism is unknown to them. Chuen-aten waged war against his opponents as a fanatical advocate of monotheism; he obtained recognition for his religion, but it was by means of force. Mohammed, another supporter of monotheism, enjoined his followers to regard war against the unbelievers as a sacred duty. It seems as though fanatical zeal finds the readiest entrance where the head plays the chief part and the understanding has set up a new proposition, then it will fight with fire and sword for the creed it has proclaimed and the formula which seems so perfect; whereas, when the heart is chiefly affected, and has experienced the living power of God, then it is possible to hold one's own opinions very decidedly and to be very earnest indeed

about them, and yet be patient in the full confidence that God, whose almighty power is a matter of personal experience, will win the day. Mohammed is much more nearly related to Chuen-aten than to the prophets of Israel: his monotheism gives one rather the impression of a simple sum, wherein the different deities—as in Chuen-aten's case the different powers of nature—are reduced to one, in order to have a better explanation of the world's economy to hand. In the case of the prophets the formula which came afterwards is of little importance; the living power is everything. Other gods do not, therefore, present any temptation for them; they must of themselves recede before the one true God and vanish entirely; they are but Elilim, as Isaiah calls them—whether this is a diminutive of El (God) or a derivative of Al (nothing) = nullities. Therefore the prophets need not enter upon a special polemic against these gods, although their relation to them is different to that of their fellow-countrymen; in any case there

is no doubt as to their attitude towards them. Moreover, the stories of the creation of the world[1] and of the flood, parallels to which are to be found amongst other peoples, and especially close ones amongst the Assyrians and Babylonians, show us how great an influence the prophets exercised upon the people's conception of Jahwe. No trace is left of the polytheism of the heathen. Jahwe alone creates the earth, men, plants, and animals, He alone calls forth the flood. There is, of course, no mention of the strife and intrigue of the Babylonian gods with each other, nor is the origin of the flood ascribed to the passing whim of a God. And so, too, any details in the prophets that reminded one of tales about the deeds of the gods, derived from Babylono-Assyrian sources, were at once transferred to Jahwe, and only served to describe the working of the one true God. The myths of the heathen furnished the colours for the picture of Jahwe's deeds, but the heathen

[1] Gen. ii. 4 *seq.*

gods themselves silently vanished into nothingness.

Many a popular conception of God could not be maintained in the light of the prophetic teaching. To the people the images of Jahwe that existed in various sacred places were entirely unobjectionable. But the holy and majestic God, a purely spiritual being, would no longer be thought of in connection with any image, and far less be represented by an image. If this God, thus exalted above everything earthly, was not to be dragged down again into the sphere of the visible, the images had to disappear. That is why as early a prophet as Hosea speaks contemptuously of the golden bull of the northern kingdom as "the calf of Samaria," and ridicules the worship paid to it as offered to a work of men's hands.[1] Hezekiah's destruction of the brazen serpent, the Nehushtan which was derived from Moses and had hitherto received offerings of incense,[2] is probably to be ascribed

[1] Hos. viii. 4–6, x. 5, xiii. 2. [2] 2 Kings xviii. 4.

to prophetic influence. In any case it was due to the prophets that images disappeared definitely and entirely from the official religion of the Jews.[1]

It proved, however, to be a far harder matter to overcome the resistance of the peasant religion in its conception of the relation between Jahwe and Israel. For the belief that Jahwe and Israel were indissolubly bound together, that Jahwe would not exist without Israel, and that Israel could therefore reckon on not being finally abandoned, was one of the most ineradicable that it possessed. The prophets declare the exact opposite; for them Jahwe and Israel have not been bound together for ever by some power supposed to be superior to Jahwe; the intimate relation that subsists between them is of a moral nature; its duration depends above all else on the performance by the Israelites of the conditions imposed upon them through their close connection with Jahwe. Should Israel set itself

[1] Ex. xx. 4; Deut. iv. 12 *seq.*, v. 8.

in opposition to Jahwe's will, the case may very well arise that this connection will be dissolved. Nor did the prophets put this last consequence before Israel merely as a hypothetical case. They declared loudly and plainly that matters had indeed come to a crisis, and that in the day of judgment that was at hand Jahwe would annul His covenant with Israel. This complete change in the prophetic conception is easily to be explained; it is the simple consequence of the ethical nature of the prophetic religion. If Jahwe represents the good, the ethical and spiritual principle, then this has but to be grasped in its depth for all national restrictions to be laid aside; for what is good cannot be limited by the boundaries of the people of Israel or explained as merely signifying what is profitable for Israel and conduces to Israel's benefit. Good, properly understood, has from the very first an international significance; it is a conception which belongs to a higher sphere than that of communities formed either naturally or by chance.

The prophets came forth from the people of Israel, and they, too, looked upon Jahwe as the God of Israel. It is all the more interesting to notice how the knowledge of the ethical nature of religion reacts against the popular view. To begin with Amos, the earliest, it is instructive in the highest degree to observe how he destroys the religious illusion of the Israelites.[1] After announcing the impending judgment in his first two chapters as a storm that passes over the neighbouring peoples, but stands still over Israel in order to discharge itself with all its might and suffer no one to escape, he proceeds to give an entirely new interpretation to the privileges which the Israelites maintained that they possessed. The Israelites made use of the same to lull their conscience to sleep; but Amos showed that the high privileges involved an equally high responsibility, an all the more faithful and exact fulfilment of the will of Jahwe.

[1] Amos iii. 1, 2.

"Hear the word of Jahwe, ye Israelites;
Ye are best known to me of all the families upon earth;
Therefore—I will visit upon you all your iniquities."

But at the end of his prophecy he even throws doubt upon these privileges altogether. The deliverance from Egypt is no decisive argument for Jahwe's preference for Israel; the Cushites are just as dear to him as the Israelites, and Jahwe has delivered other nations as well.[1]

"Are ye not as the Cushites,
Ye Israelites? saith Jahwe.
Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Kaphtor and the Arameans from Kir?"

We cannot be astonished if we read the announcement of entire destruction between the lines of this prophecy. Amos drew the necessary consequence from his knowledge of Jahwe and the rotten condition of Israel, the immorality and unrighteousness, the haughty contempt of the rich, the oppression of the

[1] Amos ix. 2.

poor; the destruction of the commonwealth was inevitable, and Jahwe Himself would destroy it.

Hosea arrived at a perfectly similar conclusion. The sections in the middle and at the end of his book which present another picture are later additions, as is the case with certain portions of the book of Amos.[1] Hosea's is a deeper nature: we can feel in his case more than in Amos' the sorrow and compassion that fill the prophet when he is obliged to proclaim Israel's condemnation; he knows from bitter experience in his own house how painful is infidelity where one had a right to look but for trust and love. His own wife has been unfaithful to him: all that he can do is to let the law take its course and punishment be inflicted on the adulteress.[2] But Israel's infidelity to its God is just as great, and least of all may this God, the holy God, be moved by the pain which the judgment causes Him to spare the godless and corrupt nation.

[1] Cp. the *K. H.-C.* on these passages. [2] Hos. ii. 5.

He owes it to His own nature to let the people die; they are hopelessly perverted, and therefore He calls down plague and pestilence in addition to all other enemies in order to wipe them off the face of the earth.[1] Such, then, is the close of the prophecy, and it is unmistakable enough.[2]

"Hither with thy plagues, O death!
Hither with thy pestilence, Sheol!
Repentance has vanished from mine eyes
(All compassion with Ephraim).

Even tho' it should flourish in the midst of the reed-grass,
Yet an east wind shall come up from the desert;
It draws near and dries up its spring
And causes its fountains to fail.

Samaria shall become desolate;
By the sword they shall fall;
Their children shall be dashed in pieces
And their women with child shall be ripped up."

Partly similar judgments are pronounced by the other prophets, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah, until finally, in the year 586 B.C., destiny is accomplished with the fall of Jeru-

[1] Hos. xi. 8 *seq.*, xiii. 12–xiv. 1. [2] Hos. xiii. 14–xiv. 1.

salem, and the so-called false prophets who held fast to the end the faith of the peasant religion in the indissoluble bond between Jahwe and Israel were driven to silence. Isaiah had gained the conviction from the day of his call that his prophetic activity would have to last "until cities be waste without inhabitant and houses without man, and the land becomes utterly waste."[1] At the very beginning of his career he had announced the downfall of the Jewish state under the judgment of Jahwe, which would rage like a mighty storm from the north over the land, and would sweep away all that lifted itself up from the ground[2]; and nearly at the end, when the people were giving themselves up to glad rejoicing at the unexpected retreat of the Assyrians in the year 701, he lifts up his lamentation over the downfall of Jerusalem and the frivolity of its inhabitants, who do not notice the hour that has struck, and do not recognize that their sin cannot be expiated, but must be punished by

[1] Isa. vi. 11. [2] Isa. ii. 6–22.

death.[1] Micah closes his prophecy with the stern judgment:

"Therefore for your sake
Shall Zion be ploughed as a field;
And Jerusalem shall become heaps,
And the mountain of the temple as a forest-covered high place." [2]

And Jeremiah never wearies of opening the eyes of the blinded people, so that it may at length recognize that Jahwe has determined the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

But the proof of the untenability of the popular view as to the relation between Jahwe and Israel did not exhaust the activity of the prophets. They went on to draw the consequences of their own deeper conceptions and to explain them. The relation between Jahwe and Israel, as between two indissoluble factors, is not the true conception. Israel is not the factor that corresponds to the nature of Jahwe. Jahwe's purpose is not that Israel should conquer, but rather that His own will, which has the good as its end and object, should

[1] Isa. xxii. 1–14. [2] Micah iii. 12.

prevail. The two corresponding factors are therefore Jahwe and the good that is to be brought about among men, their salvation. Thus the unity of the state and the national citizenship lose their religious significance ; the individual who was previously merely considered as a member of the nation now steps into the foreground, and comes to be of importance in himself for religion ; and as it no longer matters what nation one belongs to, Jahwe not being confined to the territory of any one people, so the citizens of other states, *i.e.* the whole world, enter into relationship with Jahwe. In other words, individualism and universalism have taken the place of nationalism in religion. The germs of both are to be found in the prophetic religion from the very first. We find outlines of the later teaching in the prophets of the eighth century, but neither doctrine was fully developed till we come to the last of the series. In Jeremiah we find the perfect fruit of individualism and in Deutero-Isaiah that of universalism.

In Jeremiah's individualism we have reached the high-water mark in the evolution of the profound psychological and ethical conception of religion, not only of the prophets but of the O.T. as a whole. Experience taught Jeremiah through his dealing with the Jews that men could not grow better or change their nature by their own efforts,[1] that the cultus only led to self-deception,[2] and that all other means, such as new ordinances and laws, did not touch man's heart.[3] So the prophet is compelled to recognize that the only way to salvation is Jahwe's direct action on the individual, like that which he has felt himself. Jahwe must therefore take the initiative, He must implant the right knowledge in every human heart, and grant the right mind.[4] But this Jahwe will do, for it is the inevitable result of His nature: Jahwe cannot deny Himself, His will is salvation and

[1] Jer. xiii. 23.
[2] Jer. vii. 4 *seq.*
[3] Jer. viii. 8, xi. 20, xvii. 10.
[4] Jer. xxiv. 7, xxxi. 31 *seq.*

righteousness in the deepest sense of the word,[1] and they will be realized; Jahwe Himself guarantees that. Thus the exact knowledge of human nature and the deep conception of the divine nature meet in the magnificent promise[2]: Jahwe Himself is the direct saviour of every man through the change of man's heart to the true knowledge of God and to a moral will.

Universalism, too, in the shape imparted to it by Deutero-Isaiah, opens a splendid perspective in the future, just as individualism, whose converse it is. Jahwe, the almighty and only God, wills the salvation of the whole world. His will is destined to be accomplished, for He brings true religion, and therewith welfare and salvation, to all peoples.[3] The election of Israel enters into this plan. Israel is not the final goal of God's thoughts, but the instrument in His hand. Israel is Jahwe's

[1] Jer. xi. 20, xxix. 11.
[2] Jer. xxiv. 7, xxxi. 31 *seq.*
[3] Isa. xlii. 1–6, xlix. 6, lii. 10.

servant, and has the important mission in the world of obtaining the recognition of the true religion amongst all peoples upon earth. It fulfils this task not by any great achievements of its own, but by that which God brings to pass in it. If God calls His people from the death of the exile to a new and happy life in their own country, then they are the witnesses of God's magnificent power; the eyes of the heathen will be opened as to Jahwe's true nature, and He will be revealed as the true God, the redeemer.[1] And thus prophecy finally restores again the covenant between Jahwe and Israel that had been annulled. The relation between them does not rest, as the popular religion imagined, upon a natural but upon an historical basis; Israel is not the chosen people in the absolute sense, it is not the final goal of all God's ways or the centre of His providence, but from the historical point of view it was the instrument in order that the ultimate object — the salvation of

[1] Isa. xlv. 14–17, xlviii. 9–11, lii. 9 *seq.*, lii. 13–liii. 12.

all peoples — might be realized. Formerly prophecy had been obliged to offer an uncompromising opposition to Israel's arrogant claim to be Jahwe's only people, but now, after all, in this sublime representation of the divine government of the world, this same Israel is assigned a place in the history of religion which is honourable in the highest degree.

The true expectations of the prophets as to the future are combined in Jeremiah's individualism and in Deutero-Isaiah's universalism. Here we have another characteristic distinction between the popular religion and that of the prophets. The prophetic outlook on the future is painted in sober colours. The peasant religion looked forward to the great day of Jahwe and the blessed time of peace in the fruitful home-country that would follow thereon. The prophets also announced a day of Jahwe; but that would be darkness and not light, and it would bring the people not happiness but misfortune, for it did

not mean the victory of the people over their enemies, but the victory of Jahwe over the people which deserved destruction owing to its disobedience and infidelity. Jahwe alone remains on the battle-field. His cause is victorious. This thought completely fills the prophets' minds and suffers them to look forward calmly to the future. Jahwe is everything to them. Jahwe's presence implies complete blessedness and entire ability to bring about the good. The prophets abandoned all curious inquiry as to the way in which this future would be shaped. They could leave it confidently in Jahwe's hands. They, at any rate, would be the last to promise the people a new and blessed life with perhaps a good and pious prince at the head of the State: the people was doomed to destruction and the State was bound to fall into decay. Jahwe was bound neither to Israel nor to Palestine. Here, then, we have an additional reason for refusing to ascribe to the prophets themselves those pictures of Israel's new and happy future in

Palestine after the catastrophe which we now find inserted in their writings. They are the additions of a later age which attached the expectations of the peasant religion to the new starting-point derived from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah, and once more reverted more or less to the assumption of a natural connection between Jahwe and Israel. Naturally, too, the prophets never imagined that they were giving an apocalyptic picture of the end of the world when they described the crisis and the catastrophe that were impending over the people. They described the judgment to which the people of Israel was doomed; it was only later writers who read into their statements an eschatology, prophecies of the end of the world, of the great crisis of the final judgment of the world.

Where Jahwe was so absolutely one and all as He was in the prophets, no other divine beings could subsist beside Him. In the peasant religion many traces still lingered of that belief in spirits which the Israelites had

brought with them from the desert or taken over from the Canaanite peasants. Like the gods of the foreign nations, these lower powers were bound to vanish before the Almighty God. It may certainly be ascribed to the influence of the prophetic religion that, in contrast to the other religions of the nearer East, Israel shows so few traces of magic and exorcism, of divination and "demons." This stage of superstition is past. Neither magic nor sorcery have any longer any standing in the religion of Israel. We find no formulæ of exorcism in the O.T. The spirits of the dead, too, have lost their power: exorcism of the dead and inquiry of the dead, as well as all the mourning customs which remind one of the old cultus and sacrifices to the dead, are forbidden, as opposed to the spirit of the Israelitish religion. Finally, Sheol had no significance in the religion of the prophets; death did not present any obstacle to their belief in the God of salvation, and therefore there was no need for them to bring the

conception of Sheol into relation with their belief. Jahwe alone was their hope; as they could confidently leave in His hands the shaping of the future and the realization of their salvation, they were not driven to curious inquiries as to their fate after death.

Through the prophets religion was elevated into the pure sphere of morals. The religion of the prophets develops the germs of the nomad religion; the pure conception of the ethical motive in religion in all its depth and strength led to the casting aside of the national limitations which clung to the two earlier stages of the development and to the rejection of the heathen element in the cultus which the peasant religion had incorporated. With unflinching consistency the prophets place their ethical ideas in the centre of their teaching; the peculiarity of their conception is the living organic connection between morality and religion. It is true that there have been similar tendencies in other religions; but they

remained weak beginnings, and their traces were soon lost. So it was in Assyria and Babylonia, even though, perchance, some deity there demanded of its worshippers their exclusive confidence; so it was in Egypt, where we see the first faint beginnings of a religion of an inward character at the end of the new monarchy. "*In silentio et spe* shall man rely upon the help of his God." For this growth was nipped in the bud,[1] whereas in the prophets the religion of the heart was developed and the seed bore the perfect fruit. The prophets seem to live on dizzy heights far above us, with their wonderful firmness and their untroubled joy, and yet at the same time they come before us in the greatest simplicity. No profound learning is needed to understand the prophets—faith, trust in the Almighty, exalted God, in all cases and under all circumstances, that is all. This faith fills men with confidence and courage, it preserves them from despondency and despair, its fruit is a life of strenuous

[1] Erman, *Aegypt. Rel.*, p. 86.

activity in righteousness and kindly dealing, its end the healthy development of social intercourse.

Whence did the prophets derive this religion of theirs? We have already seen that they ascribe their inspiration to God's immediate action. Jahwe Himself laid irresistible hold upon them and revealed Himself to them in all His might. Their perception of this might was in their internal consciousness. The influence was a psychical one—only in this way could they become aware of the ethical nature of religion. There can be no doubt that man's psychical nature has physical effects, but these latter are neither the primary cause nor are they the infallible signs of a true divine inspiration. The test of the prophet is therefore not the form in which the divine operation manifests itself—neither ecstasy nor cataleptic attacks, neither trances nor "hearing words" and "seeing visions"—but the contents of his message: the close organic connection between religion and ethics.

CHAPTER IV

The Legal Religion

The prophetic religion had only taken firm footing within a very restricted circle. It was represented first and foremost by these great men, the prophets themselves, and, in addition to these, by a little group of disciples and adherents whom they had gathered round them; such were Isaiah's band of disciples and Jeremiah's trusty friends who defended him in case of need, amongst them his faithful companion Baruch. But, of course, we are justified in supposing that a great many others, whose names have not come down to us, were convinced of the truth of the prophetic message and became the prophets' associates; it is a striking fact that simple folk, such as Amos of

Tekoa and Micah of Moresheth, were fervent champions of the prophetic faith. But the mass of the people was not carried away by the prophetic movement; they lacked the necessary discernment for the hidden working of the power of God; they were as yet too much under the influence of the prejudices of the traditional religion. The prophets themselves had realized that as they in their own case had experienced it, so each individual must feel God's mighty power working within his heart, so that each might acquire an immediate living impression of this all-compelling power, and receive the impulse to walk according to His will. But the time had not yet come for this—the people as a whole was far from being ripe for it.

The influence which the prophets exercised upon the religion of Israel was, however, very great. It is thanks to the prophets that the exile and the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple did not involve the downfall of the Israelitic religion. It was only the

national peasant religion that perished. But under the influence of the prophets religion had entered upon a new stage of development, and had taken up into itself such important prophetic elements that it did not feel the downfall of the State as a deathblow to itself, but was rather able to see in it a proof of its own truth. The result of this evolution was completed by the fifth century, when, under the protection of the Persian government, Nehemiah introduced the law, which Ezra had brought with him from Babylon, in the congregation at Jerusalem. From that time onwards the Jewish religion has never altered; its essential character has remained unaffected by any changes. Though much has, of course, necessarily been modified, through the stress of circumstances the Jewish religion has, till this day, not got beyond the stage which it then reached. The word of the Talmudic sage holds good now as ever: "As a fish dies out of the water, so perisheth a Jew as soon as he quits the Torah."

The shortest designation for this new and last stage of the religion of Israel is "legal" religion. For its most characteristic feature is the law, more especially the written law, the Torah. The will of God is stereotyped in a law reduced to writing, and regarded as strictly regulative. This it is that most clearly distinguishes this stage from the three preceding, and contributed more than anything else to arrest all development. Within Judaism itself it was impossible for the stage thus reached to pass on into anything higher. When a religion has become a book-religion, and its followers are bound to a sacred book, which is conceived as a law, then all further evolution is excluded; all that can be done is the exposition and application of the material already to hand; the holy book must be explained, and its principles adapted to special circumstances as they arise. In place of the prophets and priests who, in earlier times, handed down the will of God to the people, we have teachers of the law and scribes.

Religion, which was before essentially a matter of life, comes to be more and more an object of doctrine; almost more important than religion is theology.

Several stages can be distinguished in the development of the legal religion. The first goes back to pre-exilic times in the reign of Josiah. It was then that the Deuteronomic law arose, and was forcibly introduced into the Jewish state at the royal instigation. It represents an attempt to satisfy the prophetic demands to a certain extent by a reform of the worst excesses of the cultus. The initiators of this reform were practical people, who recognized that something must be done, but who had not grasped the real meaning of the prophetic religion. When all was said and done it was a hopeless undertaking — an attempt to heal a deep-seated disease by a skimming of the ulcerous surface, or to give new life to a decaying tree by external props and stays. The reforms that were thus inaugurated did not meet the real

intentions of the prophets. The prophets had opposed the cultus as a whole; the Deuteronomic law prohibited all worship in the holy places in the land, but sanctioned the cultus in the temple at Jerusalem, and assigned a greater importance to it. Excellent as had been the reformers' intentions, it was not religion but the cultus which profited by their measures; the illusion which was bound up with the sacrificial system continued unimpaired; in fact, increased vitality was imparted to it, as it could now appeal to a reformed cultus reinstated according to God's will. Deuteronomy included, it is true, many humane provisions, but all this was of no avail. The interposition of a law as an absolute authority between God and the human soul is opposed to the very core and centre of the prophetic teaching.

This "legal" tendency was further developed during the exile by the prophet Ezekiel and the so-called law of holiness. Ezekiel's scheme for the future constitution

of Israel, which concerns itself far more with ceremonial and ecclesiastical than with political regulations, shows us to what an extent he is a prophet of Deuteronomic spirit. Things have now come to such a pass that a prophet draws up regulations for the cultus, lays down laws for festivals, and draws the plans for a new temple. In like manner the so-called law of holiness in Leviticus xvii.–xxvi. contains far more minute ceremonial regulations than laws concerning civic life. The "holy" God demands the exact fulfilment of the ceremonial as well as of the moral law.

This tendency received its clearest expression in the priests' code, which may be taken as expressing the conclusion of the whole movement, as it came to be the unchangeable foundation of later Judaism. The priests' code came into being in the course of the fifth century among the exiles in Babylon. Perhaps we may consider Ezra, who brought the law to Jerusalem, as its author, but this is by no means certain. It was an easy matter

for the Babylonian Jews, who were not oppressed by the difficulty of the circumstances at Jerusalem, to draw up regulations for the new community that was to arise at Jerusalem and in Judea; these are the regulations which we find in the priests' code. It shows us within the framework of a historic narrative how the various ceremonial prescriptions (about the Sabbath, abstention from blood, and circumcision) were given mankind one after the other, until finally, to crown all, the people of Israel received the institution of sacrifice from God at the hands of Moses. The point of view represented by the priests' code deserves careful examination under its various aspects. All that can be noticed here, however, is that it assumes a development in the history of religion which leads us from the simpler to the higher and more important, that in accordance with the stages of this development God Himself only gradually reveals His nature to men, naturally most completely only to Moses and Israel, and that in God's great plan of the

universe the creation formed the first step and the Israelitic cultus the goal—that is to say, the Almighty Creator of the world directs His will according to His favourite among the nations, the people of Israel. We notice here the syncretism of the old peasant religion with that of the prophets, a syncretism in which, it is true, the deepest thoughts of the latter factor are entirely disregarded or perverted into their opposite. We can also easily understand how when once this law was introduced into Jerusalem it became the pride of Judaism, because Israel was assigned a proud position of privilege amongst all the peoples of the world, not merely in a transitory fashion as in Deutero-Isaiah, but definitely and permanently.

In the period during which the law was developed, from the Deuteronomic reform, 621 B.C., up to the introduction of the priests' code by Nehemiah and Ezra into Jerusalem and Judea, about 444 B.C., the Jews came into close contact first with the religion of Babylon, from the time of the first captivity, in 597 B.C.,

and then, after the fall of Babel in the year 538, with that of the Persians, who were henceforth masters of the near East and gave Nehemiah authority for his work at Jerusalem. The question therefore arises whether we have to assume any external impulse for the development of the law, and whether other important material from either the Babylonian or the Persian religion can be traced in the complex structure of the Jewish religion? As the beginning of the legal tendency which we have in Deuteronomy falls in a time when as yet there was no direct contact with Babylon and Persia, chronology alone would prevent our seeking for the impulse to this movement outside of Israel. It would, in fact, have been strange if the Jews had in any case suffered their hated enemies to dictate their religion to them. Nor would it be easy to understand how the Babylonian of all people could have recommended such a legal religion, seeing that they themselves rather occupied the standpoint of the old Canaanite pre-Israelitic religion.

And by the time that the Persians came into contact with the Jews, the direction which the development of the religion of Israel was to take had already been determined by the activity of Ezekiel. In all essential points, therefore, the Israelite religion, as it developed after the date of Deuteronomy, traversed this period unaffected by any foreign influence. Whatever changes came from without were of an entirely secondary nature. It may be assumed, for instance, that the author of the priests' code now became better acquainted with the Babylonian tradition of the creation and the ten antediluvian patriarchs which had travelled to Palestine at an earlier date, and that this was part of the material of which he disposed when he drew up his picture of the creation in Gen. i. and his list of the ten patriarchs in Gen. v. So in the later theology of the legal religion isolated features may be ascribed to Persian models; we may perhaps mention as an instance the transformation of Satan in the angelology into Jahwe's chief

adversary. But there can be no doubt that, taking it as a whole, the legal religion is the product of a process of development entirely confined to Israel itself.

As we compare the "legal" with the peasant religion, the advance represented by the former is unmistakable. Much that belonged to the faith and to the demands of the prophets has simply been taken over and acknowledged.

In the first place it is noteworthy that the conception of Jahwe is an entirely different one. The peasant religion saw in Jahwe simply the God of Palestine and its people, and hoped that He would always prove superior in power to the gods of the other nations. The legal religion knows Him, as do the prophets, to be the one God, transcendent above all phenomena, and omnipotent. The fact that the nations worship other gods is satisfactorily explained by the supposition that Jahwe has Himself assigned the heavenly bodies to them as objects of worship.[1] This

[1] Deut. iv. 19.

hypothesis possessed the twofold advantage of preserving God's unity and omnipotence, and at the same time of exposing the impotence and nothingness of the Gentile gods. It is impossible to represent the transcendent gods by images,[1] the pictures of wood and of stone, of silver and of gold, mere shapeless blocks and abominations.[2] The one God guides the whole history of the world from the beginning. He created the world as the first step towards the accomplishment of His design, He revealed Himself in a historical succession (as Elohim, El Shaddai, Jahwe), He elected Israel as His own people from amongst all others, and appointed Palestine for its everlasting possession—thus the priests' code.

In the next place it is to be noticed that the ethical demands of the prophets are accepted. All the immorality that had found a harbour in the sacred places in Palestine was repudiated; above all, the institution

[1] Deut. iv. 15–18. [2] Deut. xxix. 17.

of the male *hierodouloi* was stamped out.[1] Nay, more, in order to keep careful watch over the cultus and to guard it jealously against intermixture with foreign heathen customs, all the sacred places in the land were swept away, and the temple alone was preserved as a place of worship: Zion was the only place chosen by Jahwe. Soon it began to be forgotten that the holy places in the land had once been consecrated to the worship of Jahwe, just as Zion, which was now alone privileged. They were regarded as heathen heights. The kings who did not do away with the worship on the high places were condemned as wicked, and the unification of the cultus was projected back into the period of the journeyings in the wilderness, when the "tent of meeting," the Tabernacle, was represented as being already the one legitimate sanctuary. The book of Deuteronomy still wished to authorize the priests who had officiated at the sacred places in the land

[1] Deut. xxiii. 18 *seq.* Cp. 2 Kings xxiii. 7.

to continue their functions at the temple in Jerusalem[1]; but the town priests would not allow the country priests to be placed on a footing of equality with themselves,[2] and we find Ezekiel already declaring their degradation to be the servants of the priests at Jerusalem as a punishment for having served the people at their sacrifices on the high places outside of Jerusalem.[3] When we come to the priests' code the distinction between priests and Levites is described as having been introduced as early as the time of Moses.[4]

A further evidence of the increased importance attached to the ethical side of religion may be found in the fact that it is not only ceremonial requirements that are incorporated in the law. In Deuteronomy we have the Decalogue,[5] and it is quite possible that in the version of Exodus xx. it belongs to the original setting of the priests' code. In other

[1] Deut. xviii. 6–8.
[2] 2 Kings xxiii. 9.
[3] Ezek. xliv. 6–14.
[4] Num. iii. 6–10, xviii. 1–7.
[5] Deut. v.

points, too, the Deuteronomic law repeatedly urges the duty of fulfilling not only ceremonial regulations, but God's commandments, and simply repeats many ordinances from the old law, the so-called Book of the Covenant. The two component parts, cultus and ethics, are also represented in the law of holiness, and the priests' code proves its higher ethical standpoint by omitting all the immoral stories about the patriarchs in its version, or, where it cannot omit them altogether, by toning them down till they are quite unexceptionable. A very good instance of the way in which the priests' code managed to eliminate everything that was objectionable in the old traditions of the Jahwist and Elohist—both of which it knew—is to be found in the explanation of Jacob's journey to Mesopotamia. According to the old narration Jacob *escapes* to his relations in Haran because it was impossible for him to stay any longer in his father's house in consequence of the deceit which he had practised upon his father and brother, and he was ex-

posed to his brother's revenge[1]; but the priests' code makes Jacob go to Mesopotamia, in compliance with his father's advice, as a good and pious son, to choose a wife from among his relations there, and not from the daughters of Canaan, as his wicked brother had done, to his parents' great grief.[2] The ethical conscience has become more sensitive: in the pictures of the patriarchs, who were looked upon as patterns of piety, such stains as deceit of father or brother cannot be allowed to remain.

But with all this progress, as compared with the peasant religion, the cultus (and other ceremonial institutions) still remains the centre round which everything else revolves. An important change has, it is true, taken place in the character of the cultus. It has come to be a law, it used to be simply a sacred custom; it is statutory now, it was joyfully spontaneous before; it is now exactly dated according to the calendar, whereas before it was regulated according to the work of the

[1] Gen. xxvii. 1–45. [2] Gen. xxvii. 46–xxviii. 9.

peasants and the prospects of harvest during the year. Now the ceremonial is prescribed by the minute regulations of the law, formerly there were sacred traditional rites of a hoary antiquity; now the cultus is the expression of man's obedience to God's commands, formerly it was a thanksgiving for blessings received; now the most important element connected with the cultus is the reward expected from God for its due fulfilment—that is to say, a future salvation; formerly the predominant feature was a glad gratitude, the result of the blessing God had bestowed, though it is true a confident hope was mingled with this feeling, that the Giver of the good gifts of the land would prove as bountiful in the future towards those that worshipped Him as He had been in the past; now the prevailing mood among the participators in these festivals is gloomy and serious, formerly the sacrifices were occasions for rejoicing before Jahwe. Even Deuteronomy gives that impression. We can well understand that with such ideas the practice

of the cultus was looked upon as a burden; formerly this would have been incredible.[1]

The *centralization* of the whole cultus in the capital by means of the Deuteronomic reform contributed a great deal to bring about this change. The natural connection of the cultus with agriculture was severed at one blow. The harvest did not begin and end throughout the whole country at the same time; it was a far journey to Jerusalem, and the bringing of the sacrificial gifts in kind to the distant capital occasioned great difficulties. Arrangements had to be made: to prevent great disorder the three principal festivals of the peasants had to be exactly dated by the calendar; further, permission had to be given them to sell their sacrifices in their native place, and then with the money to buy fresh animals and gifts for sacrifice at Jerusalem. All these innovations were the natural consequences of the transference of the cultus to the capital. Deuteronomy already allows the

[1] Mal. i. 13.

exchange of the gifts in kind into money,[1] and begins to fix the dates of the festivals.[2] Soon these festivals were exactly dated according to the calendar — the Passover and Mazzōth festivals on certain days of the first month (the month Nisan); the Feast of Pentecost, or Weeks, seven weeks later; and the Feast of Tabernacles on the fifteenth of the seventh month—the month Tisri.[3]

As the connection of these festivals with country life was gradually forgotten, the agricultural feasts were transformed into memorials of historical occurrences. The Passover, which had originally an entirely different signification,[4] and the Feast of Mazzōth, the religious celebration of the beginning of harvest,[5] became the historical anniversaries of the Exodus.[6] Later, the Feast of Weeks was interpreted as the memorial celebration of the giving of the law on Mount Sinai—so

[1] Deut. xiv. 22–27. [2] Deut. xvi. 9.
[3] Lev. xxiii.; Num. xxviii. and xxix.
[4] Cp. *supra*, pp. *55, 56*. [5] See p. 101.
[6] Ex. xii.

we learn from sources outside of the O.T.—while the Feast of Tabernacles, which had likewise been at first simply a harvest festival,[1] was brought into connection with the dwelling in booths during the journeyings in the wilderness.[2]

As the cultus was no longer the spontaneous expression of the old country life, a minute regulation of rites and ceremonies became necessary: the sacrifices had to be exactly defined and clearly distinguished according to their meaning and object. The first steps to meet this need were taken by Ezekiel,[3] and the Law of Holiness endeavoured to compile a faithful record of the old ceremonial in order that the cultus might be duly performed in exact accordance with the ancient rites at the restoration of the temple. But the most minute and detailed account of this matter is to be found, as one would expect, in the priests' code, which fills

[1] Cp. *supra*, p. 101 *seq.*
[2] Lev. xxiii. 42 *seq.*
[3] Ezek. xlv. 13–xlvi. 15.

the central portion of the Pentateuch with very exact prescriptions concerning the different kinds of sacrifice—annual sacrifices and the meat offering, burnt offering, sin offering, and guilt offering—as well as with regulations concerning the rites to be observed and the number of the victims or quantity of the offering.

It is natural, too, that where everything depended on the cultus and the due performance of the whole complicated system of sacrifice, a yearly festival should be added, the object of which was to atone for the people and all the priests, and to cleanse the temple from any defilement it might have contracted through the fault of the ministering officials. The Day of Atonement,[1] the keystone of the whole intricate building of the sacrificial cultus, was intended to secure the effectiveness of this cultus, and thus concentrate the whole tendency of the ceremonial legislation. It did not occasion the originators of the Day

[1] Lev. xvi.

of Atonement any difficulty that features should occur in the ceremonial of this festival which pointed back to old Semitic customs, and were possibly even borrowed from the Babylonians. As an instance we may mention the goat over which the sins of the people were confessed, and which was then led away into the wilderness for Azazel.[1]

A cultus thus highly developed implied a special official class. In old times every father of a family had a right to sacrifice, and if sacrifices were offered in common, young men were sometimes appointed for the purpose.[2] Priests already officiated at the more important sanctuaries in the land, who performed certain rites in addition to declaring Jahwe's will; and probably, as a rule, their office was hereditary. These were the "Levites"; there was no fixed order of priests, the members of which, officiating at various sanctuaries, regarded each other as related by descent. All this

[1] Cp. Lev. xvi. for the ritual of the Day of Atonement.
[2] Ex. xxiv. 5.

would have to be changed. At the royal sanctuary ministrants had been appointed from very early times to perform the cultus in the name and in the authority of the king. From Solomon's time onwards we find the Zadokites in this position—that is, the men of the family of Zadok—Solomon's contemporary[1]—and his successors in office. At the time of which we are speaking they alone were recognized as legitimate priests[2]; the "priests" of the high places were degraded and became their servants. Here we have the origin of a clergy—a higher, the priests, and a lower, the Levites; and soon as the chief of this clergy, and then as the head of the community, we see the high priest above the priests themselves.[3] The priests count as the descendants of Aaron; Moses himself is said to have conferred the priesthood upon them.[4] Their servants are to be called Levites, as descend-

[1] 1 Kings ii. 27, 35; Ezek. xliv. 15.
[2] *Vide supra*, p. 198.
[3] Lev. xxi. 10; Zech. iii. 8.
[4] Ex. xxviii. 1–41, xxix. 1–44; Num. iii. 10.

ants of the tribe of Levi, to which Aaron also belonged.[1] To the gradations of this priestly body, now conceived as an old priestly tribe, corresponds the division of functions which are minutely regulated and graded by the law.[2] The Levites' work is confined to the outer court, but even there they are forbidden to perform the functions of the priests. They are not allowed to enter into the holy place, and the high priest alone has access to the Holy of Holies.

By the side of the sacrificial cultus two other ceremonies acquired an altogether exceptional importance—the Sabbath and circumcision. Both had been rejected by the prophets; they had discarded the Sabbath as well as the festival of the new moon, and instead of the circumcision of the flesh Jeremiah demanded a circumcision of the heart.[3] In the legal religion both are the indispensable signs of a

[1] Num. iii. 6 *seq.*, viii. 16 *seq.*, xviii. 2, 6.
[2] Num. i., xviii.
[3] *Vide supra*, p. 14 *seq.*

true Israelite. Ezekiel is the first to attribute an altogether exceptional importance to the Sabbath, and that not to the Sabbath in the old sense of the day of the full moon, but in the sense of the seventh day of the week, a day of rest.[1] The Sabbath is regarded by Ezekiel as the sign of the covenant between Jahwe and the Israelites, and the failure of former generations to sanctify the Sabbath is looked upon as a great sin.[2] It is quite possible that Meinhold is right when he says[3] that Ezekiel, "the organizer of the Jewish congregation," was the first to substitute the weekly Sabbath for the full-moon Sabbath, and that just as he reproached previous generations with idolatry on the high places, so he is equally justified in reproaching them with the desecration of the Sabbath—equally justified, for the men of that time did not know that the worship on the high places, which they offered

[1] Ezek. xlvi. 1.
[2] Ezek. xx. 12, 13, 16, 20, 24, xxii. 8, 26, xxiii. 38.
[3] Cp. *op. cit.*, p. 15 *seq.*

in honour of Jahwe, would be counted as idolatry by a later age; and of Ezekiel's Sabbath they had as yet no conception. It is well known what importance was attached to the Sabbath from Ezekiel's day onwards, and how jealously its ascetic character was guarded by all manner of rigorous regulations from every kind of profanation. Our next witnesses in chronological order are Trito-Isaiah, who speaks of the Sabbath as the most important sign of adhesion to the community of Israel on the part of the stranger and the eunuch,[1] and the priests' code, which throws back its institution to the end of the week of creation, and derives the obligation of the Sabbatical rest from God's own rest on the seventh day,[2] while it never wearies in its constantly iterated demands to observe the Sabbath. The possibility of observing the Sabbath during the exile away from Jerusalem may in part account for the emphasis which came to be attached as the distinctive feature of the pious Israelite. And

[1] Isa. lvi. 1–8. [2] Gen. ii. 1–4*a*.

the same reason may to a certain extent be regarded as the cause of the demand for circumcision as the sign of adhesion to the community. During the exile it was quite possible to look upon circumcision in this light, for the inhabitants of the country were uncircumcised. Whoever belongs to the community and wishes to take part in the religious festivals, either slave or stranger, must be circumcised; whoever fails to comply with this requirement commits a mortal sin. Just as the priests' code throws back the Sabbath to the creation, so it refers the institution of circumcision to the age of Abraham. It was, therefore, a very venerable institution, and as it was originally imposed before the cultus had been organized, so it could serve as the sign of the covenant wherever an Israelite was compelled to live in a strange land where there was no cultus.[1]

The importance which was attached to these external marks of membership in the congrega-

[1] Gen. xvii.; Ex. xii. 44, 48.

tion of Jahwe, and of distinction from other peoples, was a consequence of the position assigned by the legal religion to the Israelites amongst other nations and of their relation to Jahwe. Here, again, we have a reversion to the previous stage of religious development. Jahwe and Israel remain indissolubly united. Even though Jahwe is no longer what the peasant religion wanted Him to be, even though He has ceased to be exclusively the Lord of Israel, and has become the Lord of the whole world, yet He has chosen Israel as His peculiar people and restricted salvation to the Jews. Jahwe is the Lord of the whole world, but His salvation is confined to the Jews. Such is the confession of the legal religion, which combines the widest universalism, faith in the omnipotent God, the Creator of the universe, with the narrowest particularism. The Gentiles were not regarded as possessing the same privileges as the Jews, nor could they ever attain to the same position towards God. The thought that Gentiles could ever serve

Jahwe in their own countries, that pure oblations could be offered to Jahwe even at the altars of the Gentiles,[1] was beyond the comprehension of the pious Jewish observer of the law. When we meet with it, it is just a sporadic after-effect of the prophetic religion. Whoever wishes to share in the offer of salvation must become a proselyte, a member of the Jewish congregation. In reality the Gentiles only exist for two objects: first, that the Lord of the whole earth may show His power upon them as He did upon the Egyptians, and, on the other hand, that they may fill the temple with their riches and perform menial services for the Jews in their cattle-raising and tillage.[2] Here, again, Ezekiel is a typical exponent of the thoughts of the legal religion. One can fully realize the difference between his ideas and the genuine prophetic conception when one compares his picture of the future with that of Deutero-Isaiah. The

[1] Mal. i. 11.

[2] Hag. ii. 7; Isa. lx. *5 seq.*, lxi. 5–7.

latter, as we have already seen,[1] shows us that the end and object of God's education of the human race is that all nations without exception shall share in the divine salvation, and that true religion with the blessing which it brings shall extend to the ends of the world. But in Ezekiel salvation is confined to the law and the cultus, and these, again, are restricted to the holy place at Jerusalem; the Gentiles whose idolatry is surely a great deal worse than that of the Israelites in old times on the heights outside of Jerusalem deserve nothing better than God's judgments, nor shall they escape them: salvation remains restricted to Palestine and its inhabitants. Such is Ezekiel's particularism.[2] In the legal religion, therefore, we have the only true source of those eschatological descriptions of the wonderful fertility which is to characterize Palestine. Here, too, is the source of those prophecies of a similar character which have unjustifiably been

[1] Cp. *supra*, p. 175 *seq.*

[2] Ez. xxv.–xxxii., xxxviii., xxxix.

inserted in the writings of the old pre-exilic prophets[1]; and it is only in the atmosphere of this stage of the religious development that the expectations of a new national existence in Palestine with a righteous prince at the head of the state become intelligible, so that the real Messianic prophecies are to be declared as products of the legal stage of the religion.

The legal religion took a great deal over from the prophetic religion—the conception of God and the ethical demands; but, for all that, compared with the prophetic religion it implies a distinct retrogression, for in all decisive points it reverted to the stage of development reached by the peasant religion. Thus it took over into Judaism the whole system connected with the cultus, which was of heathen origin, and granted it the recognition which the prophets had consistently refused; further, it never abandoned the belief in the permanent and definitely fixed

[1] *E.g.* Amos ix. 13–15; Hos. ii. 23–25; Isa. iv. 2–6, xxx. 18–26, xxxii. 15–20; Micah iv. 4. Cp. also *supra*, p. 179.

prerogatives which the people of Israel possessed above all others, and thus riveted anew the error which the prophets had combated — the mistaken idea that salvation belonged to the Jews alone, and that they were and would remain the chosen favourites of God. The most fatal, the most far-reaching distinction between the legal and the prophetic religion is, however, this: the former is opposed to the latter in its inmost essence; it sets aside and destroys the deep understanding of religiosity which characterized the prophets. The most distinctive feature, the chiefest excellence of the prophetic religion is the close connection between religion and ethics, between the consciousness of the divine power and the impulse to righteousness, or, in other words, the immediateness of religion, so that man is in direct relation to God without any intermediary. That was the divine presence which formed the prophets' happiness and their strength in all the storm and stress of

life; this it was that each individual human soul was to feel, so that, like the prophets, it might count nothing higher than the accomplishment of the divine will. But in the legal religion piety has altogether changed its nature; the immediate relation to God has gone. Between God and man the law has intervened. Now the intention of the law was excellent—it was to codify the divine will; but it was not realized, that wherever anything living is forced into a cast-iron frame, there all healthy circulation is checked and death is certain. But this is what happened: the law severed the close connection between God and man, it inserted itself as a wall of partition, it hid God from man, and caused all living religion to languish; for piety now came to be obedience to the law and to fixed rules, and this obedience soon became at once technical and intellectual, for the law had to be learned, and the main stream divided into an infinite number of single pious acts and practices, which had to be performed at fixed

times and fixed places, and under definitely regulated circumstances. The prophets had said: the court of appeal for the righteous man is in his own heart; the legal religion made of this court an altogether external body. Nor did it mend matters much that the law counted as God's law. Obedience to the best of laws as such is legalism first and last; under no conceivable circumstances does it attain to the freedom and power of personal religion when a man's heart has been touched by God Himself.

It was not long before the consequences of this changed conception of the nature of religion came to be felt. The first thing that strikes us is the equal value set upon ceremonial and ethical actions. The law sets up the standard of right action in both domains, and, if piety is obedience to the law, legalism, then every difference in the value of the two kinds of action disappears. It is just as important for a man to be careful not to transgress the regulations which limit the

length of a Sabbath day's journey as it is for him to guard against every kind of untruthfulness. When external ordinances are thus set on the same level as ethical actions, the inevitable result is that ritual is magnified at the expense of morality, for firstly, the essential freedom of morality is affected by such minute regulations: it is deposed from the domain of liberty into that of compulsion; and, secondly, if you can bring a sure proof of your piety by the careful performance of external religious duties, then less importance will easily come to be attached to social integrity. The conscientious observer of the law is, in reality, led not by his conscience but by his knowledge of the chapters of the law, and the result is a gradual atrophy of his conscience. In this equalization of ritual ordinances and true righteousness we have the germ of the later developments of the law by the scribes and the endless excrescences of the Mishna and the Talmud.

A further consequence of the legal religion

was that God was removed much further from His people, and this in spite of the tenacity with which it clung to the belief that Israel was God's favourite people, and that Israel and Jahwe belong to each other for ever. For the law, as we have seen, is interposed between them, and Jahwe, the God of the whole world, becomes an altogether transcendent Deity. The close personal relations between God and the prophets, not to speak of the intimate and familiar converse with God on the old "high places," are things of the past. Such an awe attaches to the divine name, Jahwe, that it is unutterable. God's revelation in the law is final, and in the cultus a carefully graded hierarchy intervenes between the layman and God. That is the reason why theophanies became ever rarer; and, when those of the past are related, use is always made of the simplest terms. God is merely said to "speak," and all other details are suppressed.[1] The visions of which we

[1] So in the priests' code.

still hear in this period are just a literary device, and soon God Himself recedes altogether and gives place to His messengers and angels.[1] This further development, the assumption of the existence of intermediaries, was inevitable. The law and the cultus did not fully satisfy man's wants; the distance between God and the world had to be bridged over somehow, and converse between Creator and creature had to be rendered possible. The belief in heavenly beings, in sons of the gods, was, of course, nothing new,[2] and God, the high and lofty one, could have as many subordinate ministers as the Babylonian and Persian kings. The further development of angelology may possibly be due in part to external influences, and certain individual angels may have their counterparts in this or the other foreign religion. But the whole conception of intermediary beings harmonizes so exactly with the peculiar nature of the legal religion that it cannot be regarded as

[1] Zech. i.–viii. and Daniel. [2] Gen. vi. 1 *seq.*

merely borrowed. Thus "the angel of Jahwe" appears once more as God's especial representative, playing the same part as he had before in the old popular legends: and, besides, we have a whole court retinue, in which various offices are represented. There are, amongst others, apparitors and an accuser,[1] who comes to be conceived later as tempter to sin,[2] and finally as the cause of sin in the world[3]; then there are guardian angels of nations and individuals with personal appellations; there is, *e.g.*, Michael, who presides over the destinies of Israel,[4] and Raphael, who watches over the pious Tobias.[5] There are angels with an especial office, such as Gabriel, the messenger of the divine revelation,[6] and also princes of the angels,[7] or archangels, as some kind of hierarchy is necessitated by the great number of these beings. An intermediary of

[1] Zech. iii. Job prologue.
[2] 1 Chron. xxi. 1.
[3] Wisd. ii. 23 *seq.*
[4] Dan. x. 13, 21, xii. 1.
[5] Tob. v. 4–xii. 15.
[6] Dan. viii. 16, ix. 21; Luke i. 19, 26.
[7] Dan. x. 13.

a peculiar nature is the divine wisdom, which was originally only the personification of a quality of God, but was then conceived as a separate concrete existence, created before the rest of creation, but sharing in the Creator's work.[1] The transformation of an abstract conception into an objective entity shows us that the theoretical element played a great part in the legal religion. Later Jewish theology developed these first beginnings of the doctrine of angels and intermediary beings with an especial fondness.[2]

The law set up a standard for right action; it is natural, therefore, that the righteous should receive rewards and the godless punishment, that not only should the idea of retribution gain ground, but an accurate doctrine of retribution be developed. The framers of the law, however, did not imagine that they were doing anything else than providing a theoretical setting for the truth which the prophets had uttered. Had not the prophets proclaimed

[1] Prov. viii. 22 *seq.* [2] Cp. especially the book of Enoch.

Jahwe's punishment as the necessary consequence of the people's sin, and their word had been proved to be true? And besides, since Jeremiah's prophecy the individual had ceased to be regarded as merely an indistinguishable unit, lost in the mass of the people and irretrievably involved in its fortunes. His intrinsic importance was now definitely recognized in religion. Thus the doctrine of retribution was applied to the individual as well as to the people as a whole: just retribution prevails everywhere: you may infer with absolute certainty that sin will be followed by punishment, and that righteousness will be rewarded by prosperity, but the inference from good or bad fortune to past or present righteousness or sin is no less certain. Nothing has been incorporated more entirely into the very pith and marrow of the Jewish people than this doctrine of retribution. Even the most contradictory facts in actual life did not shake men's faith in the truth of this theory; they had recourse to the most desperate ex-

pedients in order to remove stubborn facts out of the way, merely to save theory at the expense of reality. Thus the merited reward or punishment is reaped not by the man himself, but by his children; or we may think of Job's friends; or the disciples of Jesus with their question when they saw the man born blind[1]; or, again, of the many psalms which lament the prosperity of the godless and the afflictions of the righteous. It was in accordance with this theory that the history of the people and its kings was written, nor did the historian shrink from adapting the history to fit the theory. Thus the Deuteronomists establish a regular succession in the time of the Judges: the defection of the people, their punishment by subjection to some foreign people; the Israelites turn again and cry for help, they are saved by the sending of a deliverer and are prosperous as long as this Judge keeps the people true to Jahwe. We may compare again the account given in the books of Chronicles

[1] John ix. 2.

with that of the earlier books of Kings. Thus in Kings we read that Jehoshaphat[1] the king of Judah, caused a fleet to be built, and declined the participation of Ahaziah, king of Israel, but the ships got no further than Ezion-Geber, and then they were wrecked, while in Chronicles[2] the destruction of the ships is declared to be the punishment for Jehoshaphat's sin, which is none other than that of having taken this very Ahaziah for his ally; or again, to take one more example, read the two accounts about Manasseh, king of Judah —the earlier one,[3] where nothing but evil is related of his reign of fifty-five years, and the later,[4] where we have the account of his conversion and zeal for Jahwe, evidently because so long a reign was only conceivable as a reward for piety.

As just retribution has been and is the supremest law in the past and present, so it will always be in the future. Jahwe is

[1] 1 Kings xxii. 49 *seq.* [2] 2 Chron. xx. 35–37.
[3] 2 Kings xxi. 1–18. [4] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 1–20.

surety, and is He not the God of righteousness? The only object which the Jewish people has in view with its obedient fulfilment of the ceremonial law is that thereby the advent of the Messianic salvation, a time full of happiness and of glory, will be hastened. Israel deserved the punishment of the exile because it did not serve Jahwe faithfully; but Israel would suffer a grievous wrong if the heathen did not meet with still more condign punishment, for they did not serve Jahwe at all, and habitually practised the abominations to which Israel only yielded temporarily. In order to rectify matters, therefore, Israel must be restored and the heathen judged. Ezekiel had recognized this in earlier days, and now that Jahwe again had faithful worshippers at Jerusalem, while the contrast with the heathen still persisted, the judgment was bound to come, when the godless would be destroyed and salvation would be finally established for the righteous. The day of judgment is a terrible day for the congregation itself, for

then the righteous shall be separated from the godless among the people; yet the victory of Jahwe is sure. The power of the world will be broken by Jahwe before Jerusalem against which the enemy advances, the judgment of the world will be held, and the day of unending bliss for Jahwe's faithful followers will then begin. It is easy to understand how at that time men's minds were attracted to the future, and their imagination was busied therewith, for the present afforded no great scope for either. An endless variety therefore characterizes the pictures that were drawn of the future, of the woes which were to precede the day of judgment, of the single acts of the great final judgment before Jerusalem, and of the Messianic age of happiness and salvation. Many allusions to the events of the last days and descriptions of the last judgment were now read into the writings of the old prophets. This is shown by the many additions made in order to explain or complete these supposed allusions, especially additions of a consolatory tenor,

wherein the promises of salvation follow the threats of judgment, so that the reverse of the picture may also have a fair chance of being seen. Thus little by little an extensive eschatological literature came to be formed, amongst which especial mention should be made of the apocalypses.[1] This is not the place to attempt to give anything like a full reproduction of the varied picture of the events of the last days. We will confine ourselves to one single point, which affords us the best illustration of the effects of the doctrine of retribution in one important direction, *i.e.* the doctrine of individual resurrection, which is first of all found in the book of Daniel.[2] The author of the book of Daniel believed in the imminence of the Messianic age in the immediate future; it would, therefore, be the height of injustice if those who had died in fighting for the law—that is, the most faithful and the most righteous—should be excluded

[1] Daniel; Isa. xxiv.–xxvii.; Enoch; Baruch; Ezra.
[2] Daniel xii. 1–3.

from participation in the Messiah's glorious kingdom. The only solution of the difficulty was the belief in their resurrection, and he was compelled to accept this solution as a necessary inference from the doctrine of retribution. It is, however, quite possible that the idea of a resurrection was suggested to him by Parseeism; many foreign, Babylonian, Persian elements very probably contributed to the later developments of Jewish eschatology.[1]

Under the sole dominion of the law God was forced into the background and concealed from the eyes of the God-fearing and righteous man. Finally, however, the law not only placed itself between God and His worshippers, but even over Him, so that, together with the doctrine of retribution, it played the part of a fate superior to God, and, therefore, righteousness, *i.e.* the strict observance of the law and the careful execution of a just retribution, was counted as

[1] Cp. E. Böklen, *The Relationship of the Jewish-Christian to the Parsee Eschatology*, 1902.

God's most important attribute. When once the law has been given His initiative is at an end, and we can well understand the later Jewish theology representing God Himself as studying the Thora, for it is there that He must see what has to be done in order that the course of the world may remain in harmony with the law.

All that exalts the legal religion above the peasant religion is derived from the prophets. It is, however, immeasurably inferior to the prophetic religion, and its understanding of this, the preceding stage of religious development, is very superficial. In the writings of the prophets God is all in all, in the legal religion He is forced into the background ; in the former He is the most living, the most powerful personality conceivable ; in the latter, His initiative is reduced to the minimum of requirements ; limits are set to the exercise of His power, and His paths are prescribed. The religious and ethical life of the prophets flows forth from one centre, and, therefore, forms a complete

whole, which remains united with the central source of power in the most intimate, in the closest manner conceivable. In the legal religion this life is the result of training and instruction, it depends upon the knowledge of the law, *i.e.* the fidelity with which the memory recollects the single precepts of the law; and in establishing the relationship between the law and the individual memory plays its part without distinguishing ceremonial and ethical duties; life is divided up into a number of single acts, and the ethical is degraded to the level of the ceremonial. In the prophets all hope is centered in the power and the being of God; in the legal religion it depends upon the exact fulfilment of the prescriptions of the law: there salvation is the work and the gift of God, here the reward for obedience to His law.

In actual life we do not, of course, find the legal religion everywhere developed in this strict logical sequence and free from all admixture. Life cannot be cabined and confined

within the narrow limits of a theory; there are influences and powers at work which resist all attempts at such cast-iron classification, and protest against the limitation set upon individual freedom. The work of the prophets was not exhausted when they had suggested a few new thoughts, which were acceptable to the theorists who framed the law. They exercised a profound influence upon many of their contemporaries, and in succeeding generations, too, they found kindred souls upon whom their words made a deep impression, to whom they became the sources of life and of freedom. A rich and varied religious life continued, therefore, to persist beneath the monotonous covering of the law, and of this many cheering signs are to be met with in the O.T.

There were strong natures, like the writer of the book of Malachi, who were able to quicken the dead mass of legal prescription by never losing sight of God, the author of the law, behind the dead ordinances, and who

understood and practised religion, not only as obedience to the laws, but as reverence and love to God. There were men of strong character and deep feeling, who could not do violence to their own religious experience and conviction for the sake of the theory of the law. Amongst these are many Psalmists, whose psalms bear striking witness to the depth of their personal religion; and most noticeable of all, the author of the book of Job, who victoriously refutes the theory of retribution, throwing into the balance against the strict application of this theory, which is constantly contradicted by the everyday experience of life, the worth of the righteous man's soul, which is in communion with God. To this faith he clings, though God's ways are dark to him. But is not the majesty of God in the wonderful works of creation and of Nature likewise past finding out by the human understanding? With this recognition of the worth of the righteous man's soul, even for God, with whom it is united, the author

of the book of Job has laid a far surer foundation for belief in its everlasting salvation than does the book of Daniel, which attains to belief in the resurrection through conclusions drawn from the theory of retribution.[1] And, lastly, there were broad and liberal-minded men, to whom the land of Palestine was too little, and the boundaries of the Jewish nation too narrow for the one Almighty God — men who were therefore unable to share in the Jewish pride in the law, and could not suffer God's care to be monopolized for the Jewish nation alone. Malachi tells us that the one God is worshipped in all holy places throughout the world. Here, too, he rises above mere forms and names, and, looking down into the depths of the human heart, he recognizes that at bottom humanity worships one God, however great may be the diversity of names.[2] In like manner the authors of the books of Jonah and of Ruth combat Jewish ex-

[1] Cp. *supra*, p. 229. [2] Mal. i. 11.

clusiveness towards the heathen. The former shows us how Jahwe's heart is wide enough to embrace the people of Nineveh, and how the final appeal is to His mercy and not to the law; and the latter proves the existence of a Moabite ancestress in the genealogical tree of the most famous of the kings of Israel. The author of the apocalypse of Isaiah, ch. xxiv.–xxvii., manifests the same prophetic universalism in his description of the feast,[1] which is to be prepared for all peoples on Mount Zion, at the coming of the Kingdom of God. By the side of these there were many sceptical writers, men who asked, What is the "use" of religion? or merely accepted its teaching as a matter of form, while they framed a theory of life of their own, seeing that all things were vanity—so, at least, they might have undisturbed enjoyment of the transitory pleasures which life offered them. Such were the opponents of Malachi, and, above all, the author of the book of Ecclesiastes.

[1] Isa. xxv. 6–8.

The post-exilic religion forms, therefore, a very complex whole, but the main current which regulated the direction of the rest was the legal religion. This finally swamped all other currents, so that in the late Jewish writings it is only an isolated expression here and there that reminds us of the prophetic conception of religion. To this day we are struck by the variety and diversity of the legal religion, with its eschatological speculations, its hair-splitting application of laws, and its devotional literature of the Midrash; but all these are but as climbing plants which hide the solid and enduring mass within. The law conquered; to this day it has not budged an inch; whoever does not yield obedience to the law stands outside of the community, and is excluded from that salvation which is confined to those who submit to the law.

RETROSPECTIVE AND ANTICIPATIVE

THE Israelite religion became the legal religion, which it has remained to this day, in the course of about one thousand years. In all stages of its development it presented an entirely peculiar character as compared with contemporary cults. Even as nomad religion it was characterized by faith in Jahwe, the God of the whole nation of the Israelites, the God, that is, who from the very first set up a national and social ideal, and inspired religion with an ethical tendency. It was this higher, more spiritual conception of Jahwe as God of the common interests of the whole people, that helped the Israelite religion to victory over the local deities of Canaan, and preserved

the Israelite peasants from exchanging the religion of Israel for that of the Canaanites. However much they took over of the rites and customs of Canaan, a distinct difference remained; it was especially noticeable in the fact that the character of the religion that they had inherited from their nomad forefathers could not be entirely obliterated. Jahwe never abandoned the claim to justice and morality as the sphere of His dominion. Of this ethical side of religion the prophets had a pure and profound conception: they freed it from all admixture with the cultus, and proclaimed it as the true idea of religion which was to be realized in human life. The initiative came from God, God "prevented"; such was the experience of the prophets; the only answer that fully and entirely corresponded to this initiative lay in the sphere of ethics; there the value of religion was recognized as a dynamic of unfailing power, compelling men to wage uncompromising war against unrighteousness and all uncharitableness. Religion

is pure and genuine only where its single aim is ethical conduct, and in like manner morality is deep and true only where its inner motive power is religion. Religion and morality are incomplete unless they are united, nay, more, unless they have coalesced into one whole. Thanks to the prophets, the ethical element was allowed some play by the side of the ceremonial in the legal religion. Both ethics and cultus were, it is true, subsumed under the higher conception of law, and, by being thus included, ethics lost some of its inner value, while the cultus gained, for the emphasis was thus laid not merely on the external form, but also in obedience to the law.

Thus from the very first, through all the stages of its development, the Israelite religion is stamped with unmistakable features of its own. The germ of a religion that laid all stress on the ethical side is to be discovered as early as the days of Moses, the liberator of the people and founder of the Israelite religion. It developed to its full maturity and

bore its fairest fruits in the O.T. in the prophets, but it remained indestructible amongst the peasants in Canaan, nor did it cease to exercise a powerful influence in the finished product, the legal religion. No other religion of ancient times approaches the Israelite in the elevation of its ethical character. None advanced beyond the stage of polytheism and of a religion which was at bottom merely a cultus. We hear, it is true, among the heathen profound expressions of confidence in God, of sin and of guilt, and earnest prayers for mercy and forgiveness, but the essence of their personal religion consists, after all, in the practice of the cultus or of other similar ceremonies, and their idea of the cultus is the representation of a mythological story, of some heavenly occurrence, or its object is to bring about communion with the Deity in some magical, mystical fashion. This belief in magic of all kinds, in sorcery and incantation, retained its strength unimpaired among the heathen; even in the profoundest religious

songs of the Babylonian religion these ghostly visitors, demons, and evil spirits play an important part, and necromancy and magic were always to the fore in Mesopotamia. But the most distinctive feature of the Israelite religion is its ethical monotheism — it is altogether peculiar in the ancient world. There is nothing that we can place by the side of the prophetic religion. We meet, it is true, with isolated instances amongst the Gentiles where ethical demands are connected with the sanctions of religion, but neither are these demands placed in the centre of religion, nor is the connection between religion and ethics carried out consistently. Outside of Israel no men arose who could be called prophets in the sense of the great Israelite prophets, and throughout the whole of antiquity no poem has been found to equal the book of Job in the depth of its contents, though all manner of parallels have been discovered to Job and his wife.[1] However numerous the points of

[1] *Vide supra*, p. 24.

contact between Israel and the neighbouring peoples, however many parallels may still be discovered to O.T. passages, all this does not affect the peculiarity of the Israelite religion; it will remain unimpaired, and this peculiarity —where it is manifested in all its strength—is ethical monotheism, or the living organic connection of religion and morality.

With the religion of the prophets we stand on the threshold of Christianity, although it may be said, with some show of reason, "Judaism brought forth the Christian religion against its will."[1] For we must distinguish between the chronologically latest stage in the development and that which is the highest according to its contents. To the Jewish legal religion, which finally determined the will of God, and reduced His demands to the stereotyped chapters of a code, Christianity stood in sheer opposition; to the living religion of the prophets it forms the continuation and the completion. Jesus passed over

[1] J. Fromer, *Das Wesen des Judentums*, 1905, p. 155.

the later form of the Jewish religion in the law, and went back to the prophets. He recognized in them living religion and His spiritual kindred.

That which the prophets preached is being fulfilled. Since Jesus walked upon earth there are not merely isolated individuals, raised above the spiritual stature of average men, who feel that God is the Author and Lord of their inner life, and that they are under an irresistible compulsion to do His will. A whole multitude of very simple folk may now be found who feel the love and the strength of their heavenly Father. Careless of enmity and hatred, they do not merely perform isolated good works, but know that they are bound to a course of life which forms one complete whole firmly established on an inner harmony of being. It is a wonderful inner strength wherein they are thus rooted; it is a clear conviction which guides them everywhere, and it is a fine sensibility which teaches them to understand their heavenly

Father's will at all times. They are Jesus' disciples, and it is to Jesus that they trace back their knowledge of God as their heavenly Father, and their feeling of obligation to a life of righteousness.

Jesus therefore succeeded where the prophets failed. The prophets felt God's power in themselves, and they said that this same power should fill the hearts of their fellow-citizens. But Jesus brought God's power near to men, and gave them an understanding for it by living in the midst of His contemporaries, the life of one who was entirely possessed by the power of God, and this life was passed at once under the simplest and most everyday circumstances, and, at the same time, under the most abnormal and difficult that could possibly exist for anyone. Besides this, all the various features in the prophetic ideal, which appeared successively in the prophets, were concentrated in Jesus, and coalesced into one single harmonious whole, so that in all His deeds and

words one was placed in presence of His inmost being. These men could see the constant and living communion in which He lived with God, and how He was filled with the majesty of the moral law: like the prophets, He called for love, not sacrifice, purity of heart as well as of hands, faithfulness and mercy under all circumstances, and not formal compliance with the law. Nor is it to be forgotten that God was recognized by Him, not merely generally as an ethical and spiritual person, but more especially as a Father, who, in all things great and small, shows a Father's love and care, to whom, in all cases, childlike trust and love are due.

Just as Jesus knew Himself to be near to His heavenly Father in all circumstances of His life, accepted all that happened to Him as His Father's will, and accomplished His Father's will in all that He did, so likewise He placed His disciples in the presence of God, opening their eyes and hearts—their eyes so that they could recognize the will

of their heavenly Father in the simplest experiences of their lives, and their hearts so that they could feel God's love and power. That is why His disciples and followers feel assured that it is through Jesus that they have become children of God, and that all that Jesus did and suffered was done in the service of love for them—for their salvation. So He has become the true helper of all who will suffer themselves to be helped and for whom this help is not too simple and too deep. But He is not at all the kind of helper whom the Jews expected. They expected, above all else, political achievements of their Messiah, such as liberation from the Roman yoke and the establishment of a new Jewish state. That is why Jesus rejected the Jewish ideal of the Messiah, and if He suffered Himself to be called Messiah at all—and of this we are not certain—then He gave the name a much deeper, an altogether different signification, that of one who would help the human soul to receive a living impression

of the love and power of the heavenly Father.

As the knowledge of the spiritual and ethical being of God was thus deepened, so the sense of obligation to a life of righteousness became at once more intense, and embraced ever wider spheres. Just as God is recognized as love, as the heavenly Father, so love to one's fellow-men as brothers is to be the sovereign power in the life of God's children. It is not enough to refrain from doing wrong, from employing unrighteous means, from warding off that which is evil and vile; filled with love to one's neighbour, one must go on to do good to him and help him, just as one would wish to be done by oneself. The prophets, too, know that the righteous man, the man who is religious, who knows God, ought to practise love and show mercy, and they preach the duty; but Jesus places love to one's neighbour in the very centre of all duties, with Him it is the pith and marrow of a life of righteousness,

so that the good man is enabled even to suffer in order to show love to his neighbour, and to sacrifice his own goods and comfort for his neighbour's sake.

This is where the power of the divine love is revealed. In the saying, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them," we have the expression of the dynamic which the Christian knowledge of God supplies, and in Jesus' life we have a living example of the certainty and energy which this profound sense of God's love confers. No one ever judged the position in which he was placed or recognized his task with such absolute certainty as Jesus did, nor did anyone ever perform the accepted task with such quietness and energy. It is in man's heart within and not in the world without that we must look for the lever wherewith to prepare the way for the new kingdom, to open an entrance for the Kingdom of God. Nor is the goal, therefore, to be attained in the whole world at once. We need to hope,

and to wait patiently till the seed have ripened into the perfect fruit, and the whole mass be leavened. But God's power and love render the victory certain; God is all in all to Jesus, that is the enthusiasm which fills Him. Hence, too, as it is God's will, He can drink the cup and go to meet death without doubting that God's cause will still conquer, and that surely.

The prophets had experience of God's power, and recognized the connection between ethics and religion. Jesus' conception of the being of God was still more profound, and He manifested in His life and death the most intimate union between faith and love. The work of the prophets was almost exclusively to preach the power of religion which is to transform life. Jesus did not only deepen this religion, He realized it. Jesus' profound perception of the fact that it is God who is the author of all good, led to a life of love for the salvation of His fellow-men. However small the circumstances in which Jesus moved, the

prophetic religion became a reality through Him, and henceforth proved its indestructible vitality. It has remained proof against all attempts to confine it within the formulas of a new legal religion, or to daub it over with the traditional dogmas of Jewish eschatology, or even at times to set theology in its place. Again and again it has burst its bonds and has gone forth victorious. To-day it is surely recognized that true religion is only to be found where the prophetic ideal is realized, where religion and ethics have coalesced into a living organism.

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